

punk planet

ISSUE #62

JULY AND AUGUST 2004

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notes from underground

AFRO-PUNK: PUNK'S RACIAL PROFILE | LUCERO | DAVID PAJO IS PAPA M | THE PROMISE | HEEB MAGAZINE



THE GOSSIP

GOD, SEX, & POLITICS

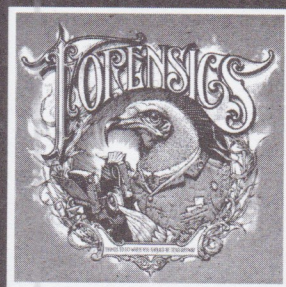


The Lumberjack Label Group



ODD PROJECT - The Second Hand Stopped - CD - Indianola Records

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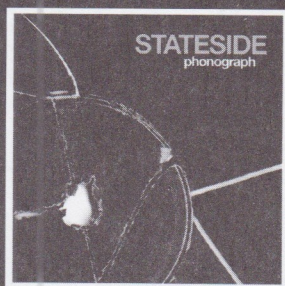
FORENSICS - Things To Do... - CD - Magic Bullet Recordings

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CIRCLE TAKES THE SQUARE - As The Roots Undo - CD - Robotic Empire

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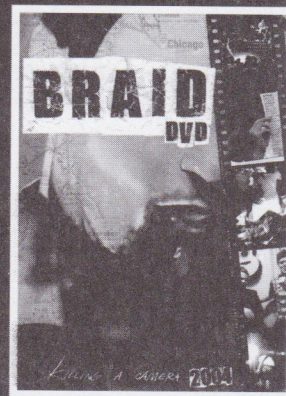


STATESIDE - Phonograph - CD - Action Driver Records

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BRAID - Killing a Camera 2004 - DVD - Bifocal Media

Braid "Killing a Camera/Killing a Camera 2004 Retrospective" DVD documents this legendary band's last 5 days in existence.

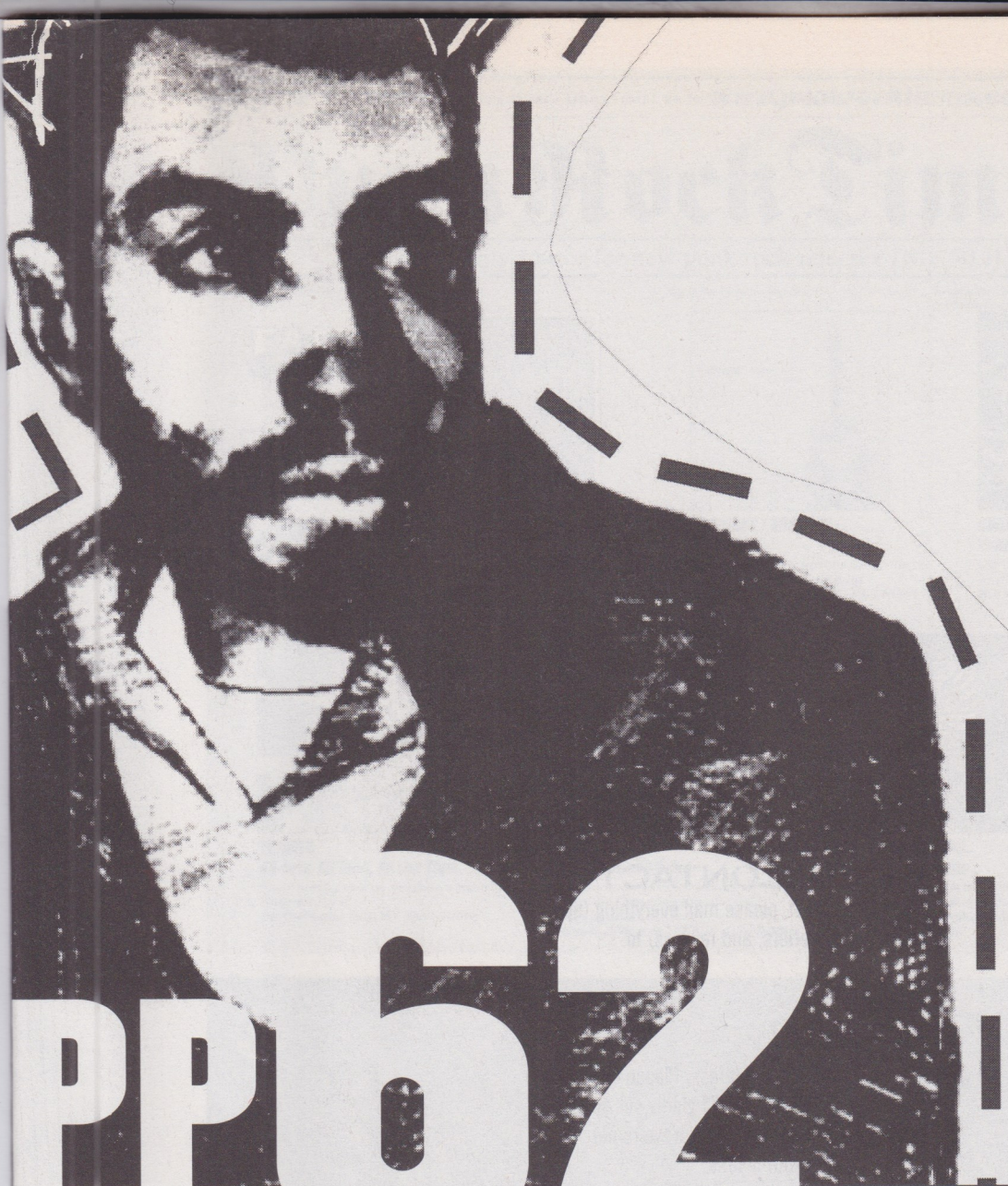


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—FILMMAKER
JAMES SPOONER

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The legendary Team Dresch gets back together for one night only; mapping the Republican National Convention; Jackie Farry fights cancer; Cat on Form; more!

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call for pricing/availability on inside front & back covers.

Ads are due August 2 for PP64

Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks ... Are you the gambling type? the risks

intro62

I can't think of a more fitting soundtrack to the summer's heat than the Gossip. Their soulful punk sound, slow-baked in the Arkansas sun before being served up steaming in the Pacific Northwest, has the power to kick the sweaty summer months into a full-on sizzle. And if any summer needs some extra heat, it's this one. With just a few short months to go before the elections—as you read this, the RNC and DNC conventions are virtually upon us—every little thing that pushes the temperature that much closer to overload, the better. If anyone can help stoke that fire, it's the Gossip with their blazing combination of gospel-fueled blues and Riot Girl-inspired punk.

The sound itself isn't the only thing that's inspiring about the band—their story is too. Raised in the oppressive confines of rural Arkansas, the trio escaped their Southern Baptist roots to become one of the brightest-burning lights in the always amazing Olympia, Washington underground. Sitting down with *Punk Planet* managing editor Cate Levinson, frontwoman Beth Ditto, guitarist Nathan Howdeshell, and drummer Kathy Mendonca tell their fascinating tale of god, sex, and politics.

The Gossip's isn't the only fascinating story in this issue; from the controversial film *Afro-Punk* to the olive fields of the West Bank, PP62 is all about telling amazing tales and defying expectations at every turn.

To shift gears rather abruptly, I'd like to formally announce the worst-kept secret in the Midwest: The creation of Punk Planet Books. It's a project I've wanted to undertake for a while and, thanks to partnering with the fine folks at Akashic Books (who released our book of interviews, *We Owe You Nothing*), it's now a reality. We have a double-serving of books to celebrate our launch with, both out shortly after this issue is pulled from newsstands. First up is the third novel by *Punk Planet* columnist and contributor Joe Meno, *Hairstyles of the Damned*. Joe's novel is a moving coming-of-age story set to a punk rock soundtrack. Our second release is *All the Power: Revolution Without Illusion* by Mark Andersen, author of the DC punk history tome, *Dance of Days*. Mark's book is part memoir, part history lesson, and part practical primer for revolutionaries of all stripes. Together they make an eclectic pairing that, to me, embodies what we're trying to do with Punk Planet Books. Look for both Joe and Mark on tour in your town soon. Find out more about tour dates and get book excerpts from www.punkplanetbooks.com.

Have a hot summer,

DAN

Punk Rock Times

Your monthly source for new punk rock releases NO. 48 April 2004

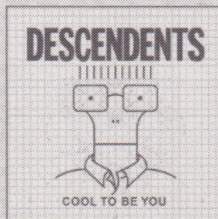
Who? Perhaps... will never know. Maybe the

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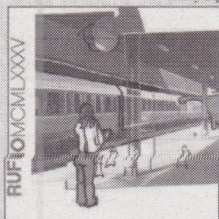
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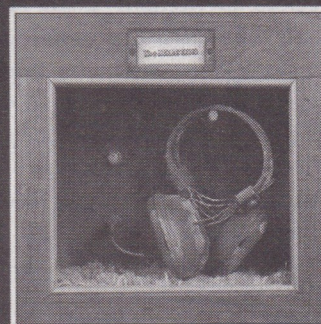
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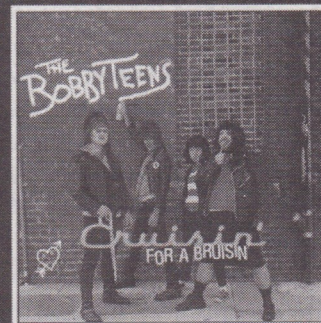
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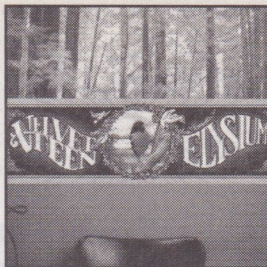
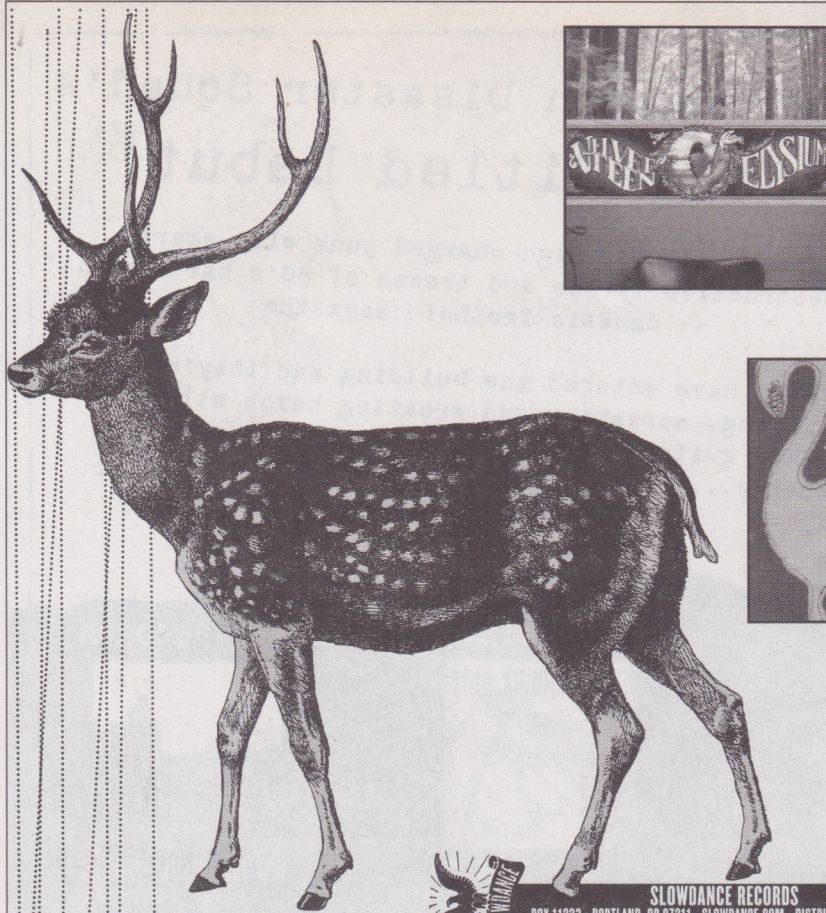


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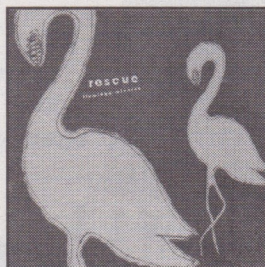


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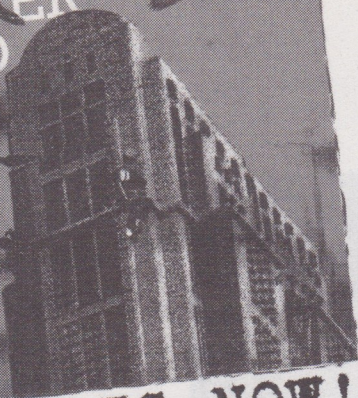
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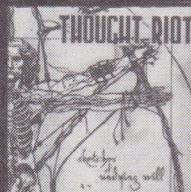
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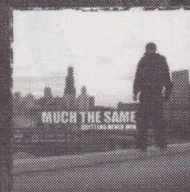
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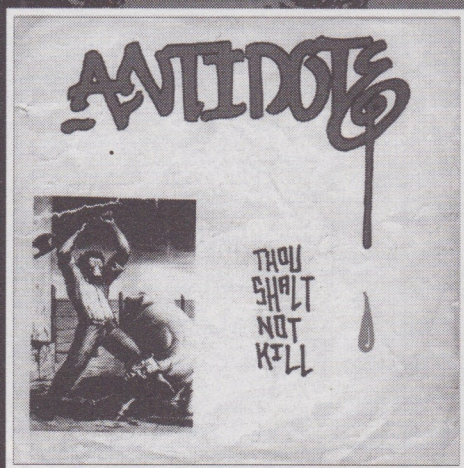
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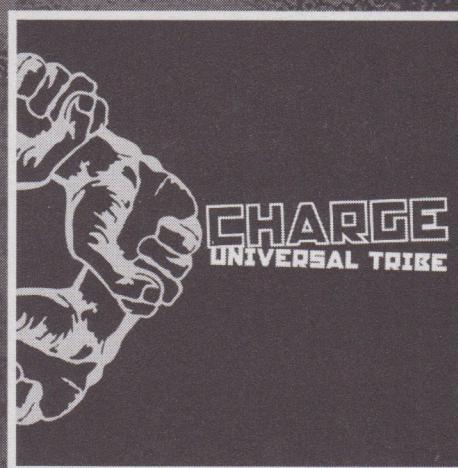
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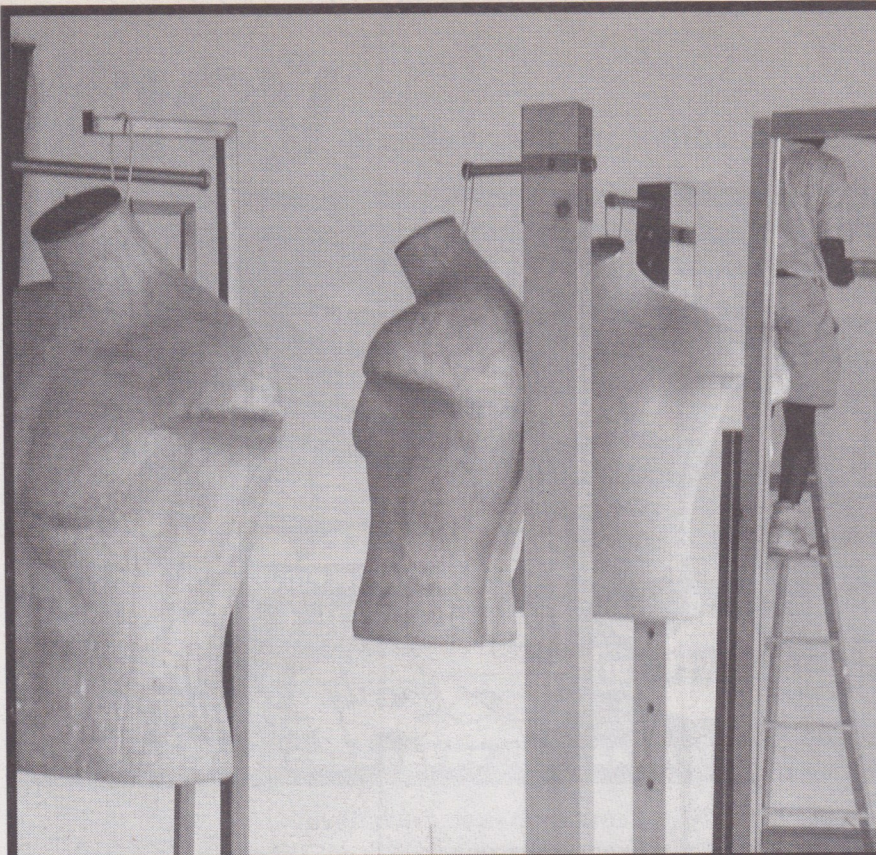
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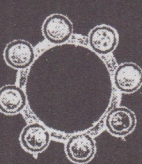
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Widows Bloody Widows ties up the loose ends left hanging from **BLACK CROSS'** days on Initial as **BLACK WIDOWS** and includes all their limited edition vinyl releases, as well as unreleased tracks. This CD is a must-have for any fan of the band as well as an excellent starting point for anyone curious about Louisville's genre-bending iconoclasts **BLACK CROSS**.



IR62 **THE NATIONAL ACROBAT**
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IR63 **LORDS**
THE HOUSE THAT LORDS BUILT 7-SONG CD
From the rotten underbelly of Louisville **LORDS** has risen. Comparisons aren't obvious, the easy answer might be **BLACK FLAG** meets **KARP**, with hints of early **INK & DAGGER** and **RYE COALITION**. Ultimately, **LORDS** are a creation all their own, a stunning feat in these days of faux punks and manufactured angst.



IR61 **PETER SEARCY**
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mail62

The PR debate continues.

► A shout out to Punk Planet—

I am e-mailing you today to offer my thanks and congratulations to *Punk Planet* and its staff for putting out such a fantastic magazine over the last 10 years. I have many back issues on my shelf and I am always happy every couple of months when a new issue comes out. This was especially true with the latest issue [PP61]—the Ian MacKaye interview is probably the best interview I have ever read in any music magazine, bar none (props to Dan Sinker), and the pieces on Sleater-Kinney, Erase Errata, NoMeansNo, and Neurosis were all very well done as well.

Which brings me to the Q & Not U interview (thought this was going to be an easy, back slapping letter did you? Sorry!). While I feel that Trevor Kelley did a good job, there is one thing in the piece that really started to bother me after I read it a couple of times. About halfway through the interview, Trevor asks Chris Richards about Dischord and changes in the underground. Chris then goes on to answer with "What it comes down to is that we'd go out and play shows and get burned by bands that though they were more important than us because they hired people to work for them. That informed the way we operated our band. We would often find ourselves in these situations where bands would have booking agents and tour managers and publicists and that would automatically make them more important. It was like 'We didn't sign up for this—I thought that we were playing in the underground.'"

I don't want to repeat the entire article, but the whole slant the interview took on, especially that part, really made me angry. Here's why: I know the underground scene is pretty crowded these days, due in large part to the success of bands like Fugazi ("probably the most peculiar anomaly there ever was" in Trevor's words), and I know some bands will do

what they can to get a leg up, like hire publicists etc., to get the better shows. But here's what I have to say to Chris (and Trevor): WHO GIVES A FUCK???

I think the reason the interview made me so angry is that Trevor (and with his responses, Chris) make it seem as if there is a new set of rules that go along with playing in the underground (managers, booking agents) and if you don't follow suit, you won't get anywhere. That is complete bullshit! The reason things have gotten like that is because no one seems to question it anymore—it's big business and no one seems to want to make a stand against it.

People have forgotten the lessons learned from watching the hard work of DIY bands like Fugazi, who never stooped to that level (and the reason they are an anomaly, Trevor, is that its hard to find four people that dedicated and hard working who are willing to go to the mat for what they believe in, not because they had Dischord and previous well-known bands).

Look at yourself in the mirror and decide whether you want to have ethics and play music simply because you love it. If you feel that much of a need to compete with other bands, and reach new audiences, go and sign with a major and compete with the "big boys"—the underground doesn't need you or that big business bullshit!

Thanks for reading, hope I made my point, and thanks again for a wonderful 10 years of PP!

Nick Lawton
Vancouver, Canada

Milo went to college for this?

► Punk Editors—

Joe Meno missed a huge opportunity in his timid interview with Milo Aukerman of the Descendents [PP61]. Meno should have forced Aukerman to explain his role

in biotechnology, but he quickly side-stepped to reader-friendly fluff.

The punk community is outraged and should be at war with the corporations altering millions of years of evolution in a single lifetime. Fear the reaper whose scythe breaks upon contact with genetically-modified crops. What the fuck do you think Neurosis' Steve Von Till was talking about when a few pages earlier he said, "You oughta be able to breathe the air, drink the water, have a place where nature can sustain us"? Biotechnology is only increasing the pace at which we kill nature and ourselves.

Thanks,
Christopher Ryan Jones
Boulder, Colorado

Oops: Those missing endings

► Greetings all,

I have a couple of concerns regarding issue 61. While I haven't read it cover to cover yet, I couldn't help but notice the end of both the Descendents and the Q and Not U interviews are cut off and I'd love to finish them.

Derek

Derek (and the many, many others that have written and called)—

Welcome to the wonderful world of the "printer error." The last sentences of both interviews were there when we sent them to the printer and weren't when we got the magazines back. In their entirety, here is what you missed:

The Descendents: "In that way, we've never been very punk. We just wanted to be ourselves. ☺"

Q & Not U: "There are a million dub records that I could be listening to. [laughs] ☺"

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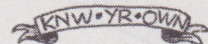


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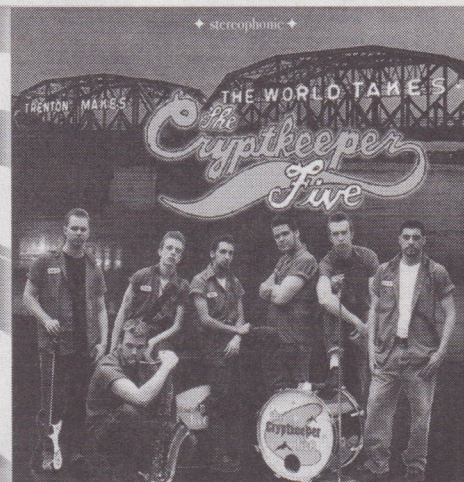


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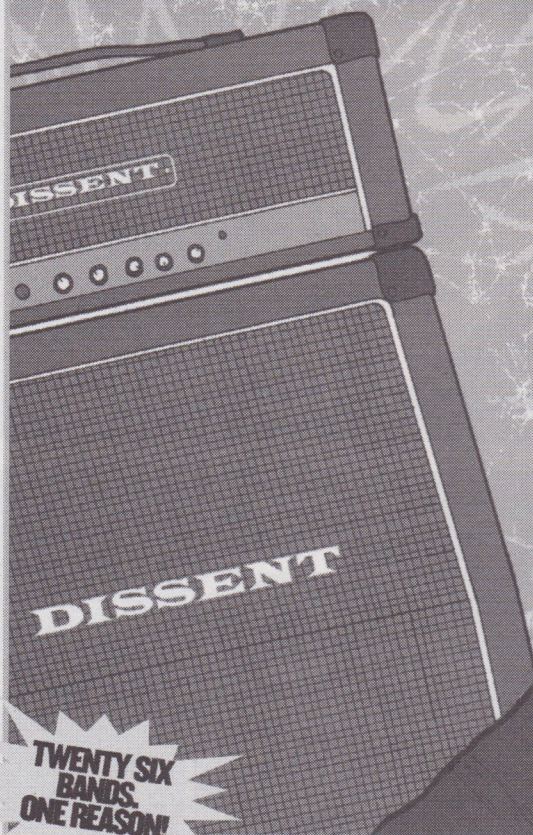
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Her Words Saved Me.

THE TRAILBLAZING TEAM DRESCH REUNITES FOR ONE NIGHT OF QUEERCORE.

Team Dresch, when they were around, burned like a wildfire. Equal parts unapologetically radical lesbians and unapologetically straight-up rockers, the band embodied everything amazing about the Queercore punk rock revolution of the early '90s. When they broke up, it felt like the movement they helped to define never fully recovered. Lost in the apathy and ambiguity of the end of the Millennium, radical queer politics took a backseat to more mainstream "acceptance" campaigns. With the rising popularity of out bands like the Gossip, and the success of the yearly Homo-a-Go-Go festival in Olympia, Washington coupled with the return of a gay-bashing government in Washington, it's begun to feel like things are starting to change. With Team Dresch back to play a single show at this year's Homo-a-Go-Go, maybe it's the spark that's needed to re-light the fire.

Why reunite Team Dresch now? Why not wait another year and hit the road for a 10-year anniversary tour?

Jody Blyle: Love was in the air. It will be 11 years since we began, eight years since Kaia and Melissa left, and six years since Donna and I stopped playing together—maybe it's really our 25-year anniversary!

Donna Dretsch: It seems like we have been talking about it every so often for the last couple of years and this seemed like a great time to do it.

Kaia Wilson: We all have made amends and get along now and we wanted to have some fun and play these songs we haven't played in years; to hard rock with friends and fans and each other.

Melissa York: I guess the timing is a little weird. But if you wait for everything to be perfect then it will never happen.

We were all in the right space and the timing just worked out so we were like, "Fuck it, let's do it."

Marcy Martinez: One show seemed to be in all of our best interests. We all are busy with our lives, homes, and new music endeavors, so one show was about all we could handle at this time.

How did the talk about getting back together for Homo-a-Go-Go begin?

Donna: We were all sitting around one day asking each other "How can we meet more girls?" and this was the best idea we came up with.

Jody: I think people started talking about playing a show right after we all made up a few years ago, but we weren't sure where or when. At Homo-a-Go-Go in 2002, I thought it would be an amazing place for Team Dresch to play, but I don't think I brought it up.

Kaia: Our good friend Ed Varga, who puts on Homo-a-

Go-Go, just decided to ask us if we wanted to play the fest. We really just needed someone to grab the bull by the horns.

Are the songs still there, or do you have to re-learn them?

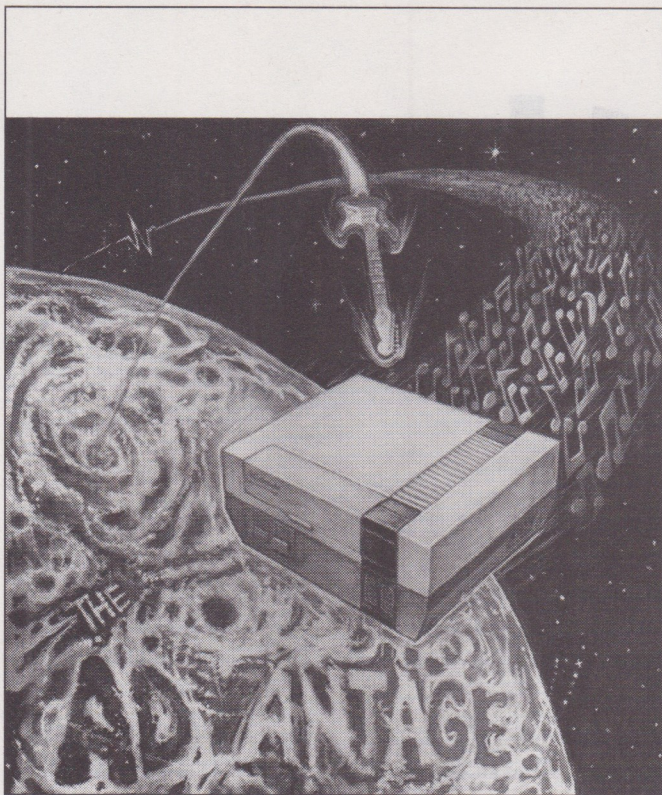
Donna: We are going to have a whopping *two* practices. I personally have to re-learn almost everything. Jody and I always switched off who was playing bass or guitar depending on who wrote the song, but now so much time has passed that I forget who wrote what and who played what. It's an *adventure*.

Jody: I'm not sure about anyone else, but I have to re-learn them all. Does anyone have any tabs? I'm not kidding.

Kaia: It's eight years rusty so I think we'll all need to practice on our own, as well as together.

Marcy: I'm more concerned with being able to play as fast as I did back then, so I'm getting a head start and practicing now.

Looking back on it, what do you think the lasting effect of Team Dresch was?



"Playing computer music on real instruments is like man-versus-machine."

INSTRUMENTAL TROUBLEMAKERS
THE ADVANTAGE GET SERIOUS ABOUT
RE-CREATING NINTENDO'S GREATEST HITS.

There's this funny story about the day that Paul McCartney met Koji Kondo. Chances are you have no idea who Kondo is—and it probably seems rather unusual that this story ends with the former Beatle and his late wife all but bowing at his feet—but to some, he's like royalty. Kondo was the lead composer at Nintendo in the mid-'80s, and he scored many of the songs that soundtracked our wasted early years. McCartney was paying respects for the hours he had entertained his children, and even sung to Kondo an impromptu version of the theme to Super Mario Bros.

Without Kondo, the Advantage would be nothing. Instead, they're a charming instrumental band from Sacramento that tweaks his and many other unknown composers' themes with complete post-punk irreverence. It's a genius idea, which may or may not explain why I felt so stupid sending these questions via e-mail to bassist Carson McWhirter and guitarist Ben Milner.

Jody: I'm not sure what the lasting effect is, but I hope the music has moved and comforted people.

Kaia: From what kids are still telling me—and by kids I also mean adults—one of the things we left to the world was a very outspoken and clear message to queer kids and freaks/nerds/outcasts to love yourself, be proud of yourself no matter what anyone or the world is trying to tell you. We got the message through in a way that really hit home for people because the music itself was a very smooth combination of good punk rock and strong—yet not preachy—politics. Many folks were really marked by that and could find a way to relate and feel the passion in the music.

Team Dresch got to exist partly because of what earlier generations of women and queers had already fought for in the world, and then we got to pave a whole new path to leave behind as we moved forward.

Melissa: It's really hard to answer that question when you are in it, you know? For me, it was an incredible experience on so many different levels.

Marcy: I'd like to think that we transcended the genre and that we'll be remembered as a kick-ass rock band.

Do you miss it?

Donna: Sometimes I miss it a lot; it's amazing to play with people that really *get* you. There are a lot of things I can look back on now and see how much we really did know each other

and understand each other, especially in a musical way.

Kaia: I wouldn't say that I "miss it" exactly, but I do have nostalgia for some of that experience and time period in my life. I am so totally psyched about where I'm at in my life right now that I don't usually look back.

Melissa: I'm glad I was a part of it—hell, I'm even *proud*. I'm lucky cause the Butchies fulfill the energy that I got from Team Dresch.

Marcy: I miss performing.

Jody: I miss it enough to play one show!

How do you think the Queercore movement and radical queer politics has changed since the days of Team Dresch?

Donna: From where I am at, I don't see a whole lot of radical queer politics anymore. Occasionally I see something here or there, but nothing to the extent it was in the earlier years.

Melissa: I feel like it really has changed. The time of Team Dresch, it was new and forgiving. Now it's not so much. The thought of "post-punk" or "post-feminist" or "post-queer" wouldn't even have come into our minds—now that's all that exists.

Kaia: This is the three- to five-page essay question—maybe even a short novel! I think that many people in indie/punk music now—as opposed to then—want to distance themselves from being outspokenly queer. It's a bit tricky, 'cause

How does a band of experienced punk musicians come together under the idea of recreating songs from old Nintendo games—and, furthermore, how much pot does such an idea take?

Carson: I think we all agreed that the music from the original Nintendo system was extremely influential, more so than any of the other systems after that. Even if you didn't have certain games, chances are you got some aspect of the music stuck in your head either from a friend that had the game or just hearing one of the hooks in some random place. This music is universal. I'm not sure about the pot thing—but I know that it took a lot of playing.

What was out of your reach? What couldn't you replicate with this set up?

Ben: The Nintendo sound system could only make four sounds at once: Two sound somewhat like a guitar, another sounds rounder and deeper, like bass, and another makes white noise, which can be shaped into drums. We have no excuse why we couldn't play any of these songs. Playing computer music on real instruments is like man-versus-machine or the whole John Henry and steam-drilling thing—only dorkier.

Do people confuse how serious you are about this?

Carson: I'm sure they do, but also people are confused.

I think artists can do something with humor and still feel completely profound about it. Is it fair to say that's at play here?

there's that "Hey just listen to our music dammit" mentality, which I understand partly, and then there's the fact that there's such widespread homophobia and heterosexism swimming around everywhere—punk scene *definitely* included. I feel like these weird backlashes within backlashes start happening—like the queers are all "I'm queer!" and then the media and "the scene" is all "Why do you need to talk about it? You're sacrificing your musical integrity for your politics." Then the queers are all like, "Just listen to my music dammit," resulting in the omission of anything too "political" or "gay" from their music, art, and press. My belief is that as long as there's still kids out there writing me letters about how this music has

changed their lives and kept them alive, it sure seems important to me to keep being politically outspoken.

Do you think that the Homo-a-Go-Go show is going to feed your want to keep going? Would you?

Melissa: I feel like I already am.

Marcy: I've never stopped playing with other bands and other projects. I'm actually working on my first solo project at the moment.

Donna: We all have musical projects that we are doing now, but you never know what the future brings. These are people that I love deeply and always want in my life.

Kaia: I think it will fuel my desire to keep playing music that I love, but not to re-

Ben: There is an irony to what we do, but the music is legitimate. We're deadly serious about our musical joke.

Carson: I could see how it could be humorous and then that would apply, but I tend to think of it more as quirky and fun. I usually hope people are laughing *with* us—instead of *at* us.

Why can't it be both serious and funny?

Ben: Some of my favorite songs are both hilarious and serious, pathetic and pretty, all at the same time.

A lot of bands put a huge emphasis on having a "message" or a "platform." But I couldn't use those words while describing this band even if I tried.

Carson: The idea is simple and innocent. I guess the only message could be hidden in what compelled each of us to go through with it—possibly.

I imagine a lot of people don't get this. Have you noticed that?

Carson: Occasionally we get people who really liked it but had no idea it was a cover band.

Ben: Yeah, a really enthusiastic lady once told us we could sound like Phish if we could just get someone to sing for us. —Trevor Kelley

The Advantage's self-titled debut is available from 5RC: www.5rc.com

unite in a more permanent fashion with Team Dresch. Sometimes once you've moved on, you find you don't need or want to try to recapture things from your past. That's where I'm at. I think it's just gonna be fuckin' *fun* to do this, and it'll be good for letting Team Dresch's soul rest peacefully and give folks another—or

a first-time to see us, and have that connection.

Jody: Ask me after the show!

—Daniel Sinker

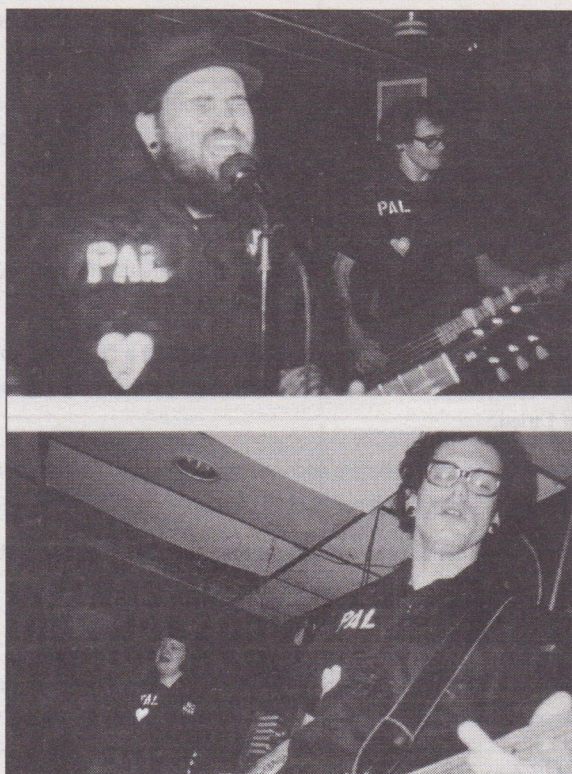
Homo-a-Go-Go is a queer music, film, art, culture, and education festival in Olympia, Washington. It takes place August 3-8. For more info, go to www.homoagogo.com.

"We want to help people not feel totally lost."

WHAT BETTER WAY TO HELP THE LEGION OF ACTIVISTS CONVERGING ON NEW YORK CITY FOR THE RNC PROTESTS FIND THEIR WAY THAN A MAP?

In the novels of radical feminist author Kathy Acker, who recently died from breast cancer, pirates use maps to find treasure. In the work of

literary critic Franco Moretti, maps give geographical context to writers' own lives, and hence their work. This August, when the Republican National



"We're not trying to fool ourselves into thinking that playing political punk rock changes anything."

CHICAGO'S PAL CREATES POLITICAL SONGS YOU CAN SING ALONG TO.

Out of nowhere, PAL has quickly become one of my favorite bands. Think the Dead Milkmen meet the Pixies, with catchy melodies, a Farfisa organ, an occasional trumpet blast, and megaphone lyrics that actually mean something. With a forthcoming 7" *Audio Peace Treaty*, this Chicago band, featuring Seth, Michele, Tim, & Jamie—all first names to keep it friendly—produces harmonious, poppy, political punk, that by the second chorus, has you singing along. Their next goal? Free Music, a label and website dedicated to distributing free demos for unknown bands. Seth, guitar player and vocalist, answered a few questions about the power of PAL.

At a live show, you made this statement: "We are a band birthed in war, right after September 11. We live in a nation birthed in war." How has America's ongoing war effort influenced the band?

Convention rolls into New York City to put George W. Bush on the presidential ballot, activists inspired by the work of Acker, Moretti and others will use maps of their own to coordinate and commemorate the resistance.

The People's Guide to the Republican National Convention, produced by a collective of NYC designers and activists, will portray everything from where to find cheap lodging, public bathrooms, and Internet access to which hotels the delegates are staying in to the routes and meeting points of the myriad marches and social events going on throughout August and early September. The map will also include info on the various multi-national corporations and corporate media

outlets headquartered in New York which are considered "war profiteers" or parts of the global web of commerce responsible for global displacement and impoverishment.

And the map will be "the most beautiful and elegant map ever," in the words of one of the producers, going by the name Jean.

"Normally [at big protests] you have the welcome packets that are like 20 pages so you really have to memorize the info or be hunting through it all the time," says Jean. "This is a way to make it accessible."

The map will be an easily-foldable 22"x33", full color and based on the actual New York public transit map. The producers plan to print

about 25,000 copies—more if needed—and sell them in book and zine stores, as well as over the Internet, to pay for the printing. NGOs and community groups can also order copies almost at cost to sell for their own fundraising.

"We want to keep it as cheap as possible" says Hesper Smith (not her real name), a collective member working on distribution and production. "Our main goal is to get them in people's hands."

There are also plans to publish the map in local alternative papers, most likely the *Independent* produced by Indymedia activists, shortly before the protests.

"It is portable, easy to see info, and really attractive. And it will also be a memen-

to, something for people to keep to remember the days," says media activist "Luckey Haskins," one of the members of the collective. "People can look back at it and say, 'Remember when we kicked George Bush's ass?'"

The producers note that as mega-protests of this type have gotten bigger and bigger, the map will be crucial in making sure visitors aren't totally overwhelmed. It will include info on Manhattan and Brooklyn and the Bronx, where events will also be held.

"There are literally three marches a day going on, not to mention all the cultural events and shows and parties," says Haskins. "And New York is just such a big city, you can't really compare it to

I don't know what I'm going to sing about when Bush gets voted out of office this fall. For two years now, the US has been in a constant state of war with someone or other, so what else can we have sang about? Does singing about girl troubles or partying seem relevant in the face of war? Not to me it doesn't. I personally don't consider myself a hugely political guy, but to discuss anything else given the current climate would be trying to ignore the giant elephant in the middle of the room.

Do you feel playing in a rock band, writing songs, and performing in front of a live audience somehow works to address larger social or political issues?

We're not trying to fool ourselves into thinking that playing political punk rock changes anything. There's no reason to believe that our opinions are any more valid than anyone else's just because there's three chords behind them. But in this increasingly paranoid and partitioned society, we find ourselves in the post-September 11 America, where it's important to keep the discourse open. Some people write their congressman, some take to the streets in protest. What we do is write songs about it.

A good example seems to be your song "Black Helicopters," which lyrically presents a kind of worse-case scenario of American rights being slowly stripped away and yet the music itself is very upbeat, very happy.

somewhere like Seattle."

"For someone who's not from New York City, it can be really confusing and scary," adds Jean. "Part of this is that we want to help people feel safe and secure, to know how to negotiate the subway system, to know where they can go if they need to escape the cops or take a break from the streets. We want to help people not feel totally lost."

Specifically, the info listed on the map will include the march routes and location of convergence spaces, refugee spaces, event venues, indie-media centers, pirate radio stations, radical bookstores, delegates' hotels, GOP donors' offices, corporate media headquarters, RNC event locations, "war profi-

teers/corporate military industrial companies," bus and train routes, hospitals, cheap food and lodging, police stations and bail bondsmen, and helpful info including weather, "what to wear," information about contacting media outlets, interesting statistics about Manhattan, and "critical locations for flyering."

"We'll also have a section on knowing your rights in New York, since legal rights are different everywhere," adds Hesper. "There will be a big police presence obviously, so it will be better if everyone knows their rights right from the start."

And along with all the information, the map will be decorated with work from local artists.

It seems like political music is the least popular form of rock imaginable right now. Michele, our keyboard player, was at a punk show the other night when this rocker asked her what kind of music PAL played. She said "Political punk rock." He said "Ugh. *not* political! Don't say you were influenced by Fugazi!" I'm paraphrasing, but you get the idea. Maybe to an extent, songs like "Black Helicopters" are the bitter pill wrapped in a candy shell. Sometimes instead of banging it over their head, you gotta hit them with the sweet, smooth sounds of love. After all, you catch more flies with honey.

Tell me about the Free Music project.

Free Music is just that: Free CDs to enjoy or trade with your friends. I have these crazy, pie-in-the-sky ideas about de-mystifying music and performance and bringing it back down to ground level, in a common man's kind of folk music sort of way. We've all got songs in us; we've all got stories in us. You don't need a label to legitimize you, you don't even need an audience. Write it, sing it, record it, we'll put it out. You pay for the blank CDs, we do the rest. We make glorified demos. We help you out with the first step. Besides, what's more fun than free? We've done a free live PAL CD, a Foxtail VST CD, and we just put the finishing touches on a new one by Michele 29. Maybe whoever reads this will want to be next. —Joe Meno

PAL is online at www.palpalpal.net.

"There is such an artistic community here," says Hesper, a New York native who thinks the protests will be "a fantastic, insane time."

Overall they expect the map to help people fully enjoy and participate in what appears to be one of the

biggest and most comprehensive weeks of resistance in recent memory.

"The best way to really piss them off is for us to have a great time," says Haskins.

—Kari Lydersen

For more information or to purchase the RNC guide, go to www.rncguide.com

"This has the possibility of being a last shot."

NEW YORK'S FAMOUS (AND INFAMOUS) ABC NO RIO COLLECTIVE FIGHTS TO KEEP THE BUILDING THAT THEY'VE CALLED HOME FOR ALMOST 25 YEARS.

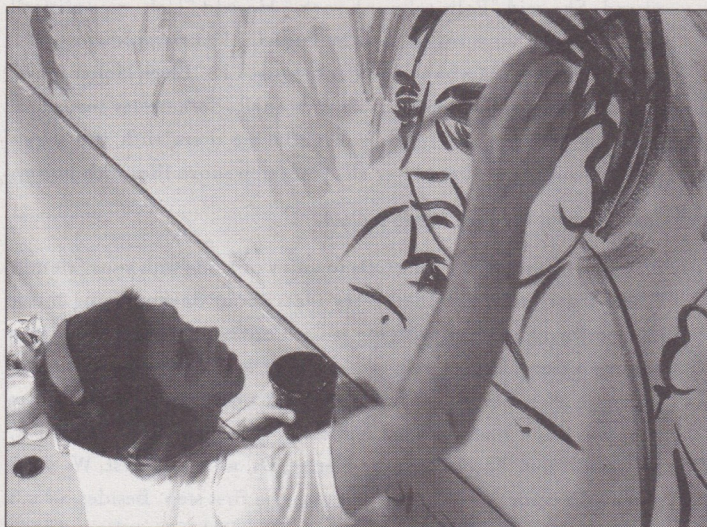
For nearly a quarter of a century, 156 Rivington Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side has been a wreck. But it has also been a community. Better known as the art and activism collective

ABC No Rio, the building is a sort of mothership for artists, activists and punks from New York City and well beyond.

The deeply resourceful collective is equal parts logistical

GALLERY: Under Construction

ARTWORK BY RUSS POPE



base and cultural center. There is an art gallery and a zine library. There is a darkroom, screen-printing equipment, and a computer center. Food Not Bombs uses the kitchen. Hardcore bands from around the world play once a week in the gallery. There are meetings and readings. Every square foot of the building three floors is culturally and politically relevant.

ABC No Rio has always struggled to hang on to its headquarters, which it does not own. Part rental and part squat, the building must be fixed up or ABC No Rio is out—the city says so. But the city is cutting the steadfast collective a break: come up with the money to fix 156 Rivington, and you can have it for a buck.

Of course, it's more complicated than that. The volunteers at ABC No Rio must come up with \$328,000 by the end of

the year. And that is for phase one of the rehab—there are three of them. But if they find the money for phase one, the city says, the building is theirs.

Punk Planet spoke with ABC volunteer Rob Raymer about the effort to save 156 Rivington.

How are things going?

Slow. We have a lot of money to raise.

How much have you raised so far?

As of the end of March we've raised about \$200,000.

That's more than half. How is the money coming in?

It's a combination of things. A lot of money comes from the hardcore shows. The hardcore collective uses the gallery space for shows every Saturday. Up to half the money we make at the door for the hardcore shows—

depending on how much the bands need—goes straight to the building. ¶ We've also been doing art shows.

There's a show coming up of small pieces of art strung on clotheslines throughout the building that are going to be for sale from \$25 to \$50 each. Each artist is donating one or two pieces to the building. All of the money that that show makes is going to go to the building. ¶ Also, some of the different collectives that work in the building have been having their own fundraisers: Books Through Bars had a bingo night; a group of people has been having ping-pong tournaments to raise money. There's been a lot of different creative stuff like that, as well as a lot of small donations from people.

What about grants?

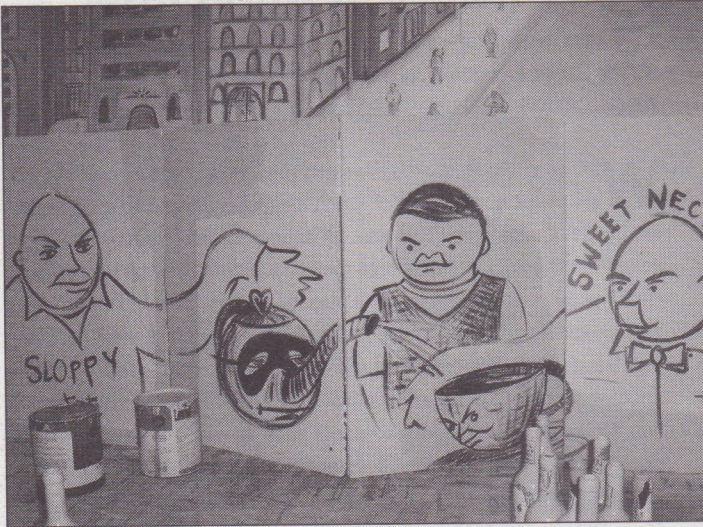
We try to write grants but we are kind of in a catch-22: We can get grants for specific programs, but most of the grants we could get for construction of the building would require us to own the building. So we can't get the grant until we own the building, but we need the grant to make money to own the building. Until we own the building we're out of luck.

What happens if this doesn't work?

This has the possibility of being a last shot. But we have been in really desperate situations before and come through them.

How did ABC No Rio get started? It was originally a squat, right?

It's a little more complicated than that. On New Year's Eve



Southern California-based Russ Pope's paintings combine autobiographical elements—recurring characters from his own life—with found text and surreal images. His artwork can be seen at www.russpope.com.

1979, a group of artists did something called The Real Estate Show. It was an art show that tried to highlight the ridiculous rents and the impending gentrification of the city. They did it in an abandoned building. A few days later the show got padlocked by the police with all of the artwork inside. The artists made a huge fuss and the show had already gotten a lot of publicity, so the New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) allowed them to leave the show up for about a month. In the meantime HPD found the artists a new location, the place we are currently working to keep. HPD was renting them the building. The building had been abandoned for a very long time and there was

a lot of work to be done and a lot of work was done to keep the building habitable. It was only really used as a gallery space at that point. ¶ In 1994 the city wanted to start developing the Lower East Side, so they terminated the lease with No Rio. There were a lot of eviction threats. People started squatting the upper floors. Finally in 1997, after a lot of direct action, the city reached an agreement with No Rio. We could have the building for \$1 if we could come up with the money to renovate.

But now the city has shown some flexibility.

HDP decided instead of renovating whole thing at once, we could break it into phases. So once we have money for the first phase and start the

renovations — we own the building. Once we own the building we can use some of those grants we are eligible for to help pay for the rest of the renovations and I have no

doubt that we'll be around for a long time afterwards.

—Jeff Guntzel

To make a donation to help keep ABC No Rio open, visit: www.abcnorio.org.

“When I first got the news, I was in total denial.”

FUCK CANCER'S JACKIE FARRY LEARNS TO SMILE IN THE FACE OF PAIN.

Silver Lake Boulevard winds through the eastern end of Los Angeles resembling anything but a straight line. It's a strange and backwards main drag that starts in the 'hood and, within a couple blocks, wanders into the mansions that are littered among the neighborhoods' many tree-shaded hills. One evening this past April, I was

driving down Silver Lake Boulevard past Spaceland, a shabby little dive bar that's skirts one of the area's more tony intersections. It was a typical night out in Silver Lake: On the street there was smoking and small talk, and a line stretching from the club around the corner; inside drinks were held aloft, and ticket stubs tucked away. A



"Garage has been so good for so many years. It's fine if it's getting attention now."

THE WOMEN OF THE HUSBANDS PLAY THEIR STRAIGHT-AHEAD GARAGE ROCK WITH NO APOLOGIES NECESSARY.

Waiting for the Husbands, I wasted some time coming up with a theory about how periods of economic recession lead to spiked interest in lo-fi garage rock. This was, of course, bullshit so plan B was to compare the popularity of garage rock to the popularity of trucker hats. Hear me out, haters: Both serve a specific purpose which their fan-base may be invested in for the long haul, or may discard next week for some new trend. Some adherents will always respond to music with a driving, unpolished, no-apologies attitude just as others will always need ventilation and variable sizing for endeavors such as—let's see here—driving tractors. Regardless, the Husbands are a delight for both garage purists and Johnny-come-latelys, burning through originals and covers with equal ferocity and good fun.

Talking to the group's core members Sadie Shaw and Sarah Reed is also a treat. The two have been in bands together for a decade (including the Lies and the Bonnot Gang) make films together, and are clearly sticking around for the love of it.

man onstage was playing a heartbreaking sonnet to a friend, though there was something there that didn't just lend itself to merely going through the motions. The song was Ratt's "Round And Round," the singer was Lou Barlow.

It would seem funny—ironic even—if there weren't such a sad twist to this particular selection. Barlow was playing the song for Jackie Farry, a woman whose long history in the music industry (not to forget her irresistible and carefree charm) has allowed her to befriend just about every famous musician of note in the past 15 years. She has tour-managed artists like Elliott Smith and Pavement and at one time

hosted a show on MTV called *Superrock* (perhaps best known for kicking both *Headbanger's Ball* and Rikki Ratchman's aquanet-using ass to the curb.)

Two summers ago, while in the midst of a world tour with The Datsuns, Farry was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a rare form of cancer. It's an illness she has chosen to fight quite uniquely with the help of her friends under a loose organization appropriately dubbed "Fuck Cancer."

"When I first got the news, I was in total denial," admits Farry. "My way of reacting [was] the only way I knew how: I have all these amazing friends and I love throwing parties."

Planning the parties started as a way of raising money to help fund her fight—Farry, like so many in the music industry doesn't have health insurance—but they grew exponentially.

"[It] underlines how fragile our lifestyle is," Barlow said a few weeks after the performance. "None of my friends are insured, they can't afford it. It's a huge issue in general, and not just for musicians."

That night at Spaceland, Barlow was joined by the Breeders and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O. The evening culminated with a raffle Farry had organized on her website in the months proceeding. Rallying friends for contributions, winners were awarded

everything from a guitar lesson with Stephen Malkmus, to a free session with a therapist, to a hat once worn by Sharon Osbourne. The money generated went to offset Farry's own costs, with additional proceeds going to other young people with cancer. A second benefit headlined by Cat Power took place in New York City this past May.

"I am contributing to a few different causes and I definitely want to share the wealth," Farry says. "But this is the first time I've had to focus on myself, which has been hard and weird. My goal now is to feel like myself again and get my life back."

—Trevor Kelley

Fuck cancer at: www.jackiefarry.com

So you're about to take off for a short tour, right?

Sadie: Yeah, it's kind of our dream tour—it's all bands from the label: the Sultans, Dan Sartain, Beehive and the Barracudas. We're playing 10 shows with all of our favorites.

What ties all of your Swami bands together?

Sadie: We're all so different, but there's a love of old, amazing rock'n'roll in common. John Reis has some saying on the website, like "yesterday's music today."

Sarah: I think John has always had this thing for bands that he thinks are sincere and heartfelt. I definitely feel that way about all these bands—they're really exceptional in what they're doing. I don't think they sound like anything else.

Sadie: It shouldn't be mistaken for a 'retro' label only, because it's not like that.

Do you get that a lot?

Sadie: Yeah, in bad reviews.

Sarah: When they like us, they say that we sound like the '60s—but that's not all we are—and when they don't like us they say we're "just another" '60s garage band.

Sadie: But we're around at a time when garage is just so damned trendy, that's the pitfall.

What do you think about the mainstreaming of garage?

Sarah: Well, the two bands that I think of are the White Stripes and the Strokes, and I like both of them, so I'm happy they're doing well. I like them a lot better than Britney Spears.

Sadie: Of course, it's my tendency to be defensive—most of the garage bands I like, like the Dirtbombs and the Demolition Doll Rods—people in them have been doing this for so long, it's not like it's a new wave. All these heroes of mine are still doing it—garage has been so good for so many years. It's fine if it's getting attention now.

Now that your lineup is changing, how will that affect your sound?

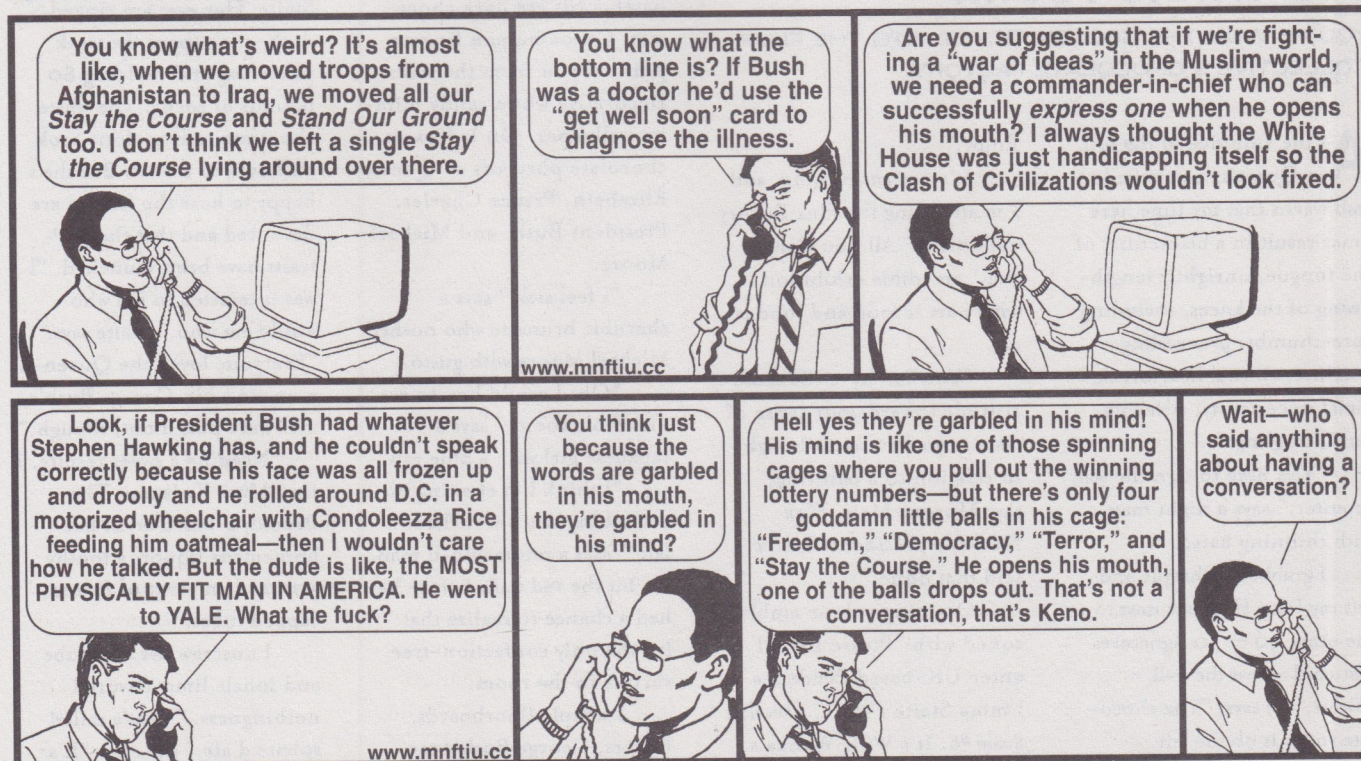
Sarah: It definitely has affected it, but it's still the two of us doing most of the songwriting. I think we've always wanted our sets to not have the same mood the whole way though, to mix it up. It's convenient because, whether we wanted to change or not, it's pretty different now.

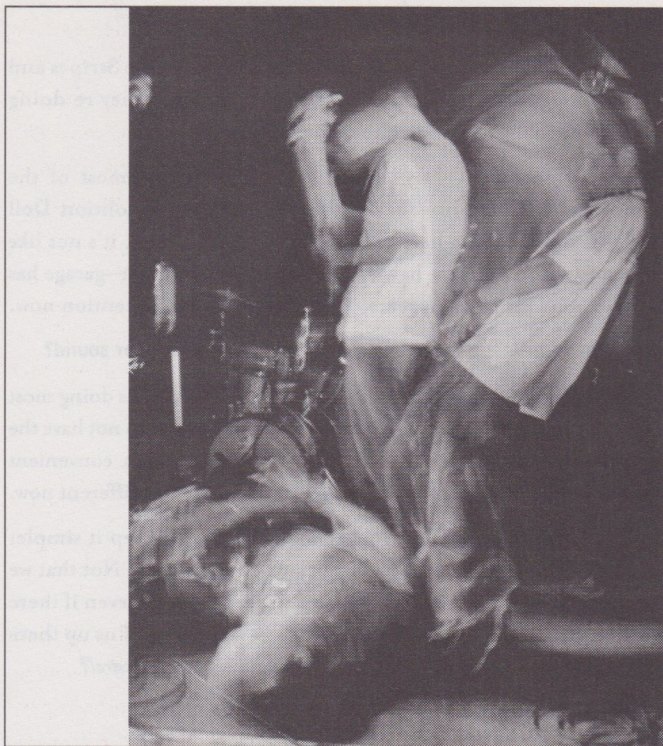
Sadie: We're still pretty set in our ways: We like to keep it simple, and we don't want to make it too slick or complicated. Not that we *could* get it that slick, but still! We want to keep it simple even if there are five people playing up there. I hope having more of us up there makes it more of a party than more, I don't know, *orchestral*?

Sarah: It shouldn't sound like ELO. —Katje Richstatter

For more information on the Husbands, drop by www.thehusbands.net

Get Your War On BY DAVID REES





"Punk rock as a style—fast guitars, spikey hair—is totally irrelevant to me."

BRIGHTON, ENGLAND'S CAT ON FORM WORKS TO KEEP THE TRADITION OF PUNK ALIVE BY BREAKING IT DOWN.

The first time I saw Cat on Form play, I acted like a total ass. My band opened for them at a club in London; our set went well, so we proceeded to chat through the entire next set. When Steven Ansell, the singer for Cat on Form finally turned to me and said, "Shut up, I'm trying to watch the band. Man I hate it when people talk over bands," I responded, "Fucking punk."

An hour later, when Cat on Form took the stage, I was seized by pangs of guilt: they were *really* good. They've created a form of punk rock that I, as a musician, could never achieve. It's fleshy and sincere; if you listen carefully, you can hear the hum of displaced air pop over magnetic pick-ups, the whistle of wind push through strangled vocal chords and the crack of wood between skin and steel. To me, their music is as pure as it gets.

Their debut album *Fear And Structure* was a love song to all who believe that music can move people.

"Oh, I would love to eat the whole room."

YOU'VE WON THE GOLDEN TICKET INTO THE FLUX COLLECTIVE'S CHOCOLATE FACTORY.

At the entrance of the loft in Queens, a stenciled wall warns that my time here "may result in a blackening of the tongue, unrightly lengthening of the knees, including fore-thumbs, proceeding hairline, eternal heartbreak, facial uncertainty, silvering, [and] tingling."

"You have to sign the wall to enter," says a slight man with thinning hair.

I grabbed a Sharpie and left my John Hancock next to the other 40 or 50 signatures scattered across the wall. "Great," he says. "The chocolate room is on the left.

Enjoy."

It's a warm evening, and I'm attending the Flux Factory collective's "All You Can Art," an edible exhibition where art is food and food is art.

"You can have the same attitude toward your sense of taste as you do towards sight in relation to a painting," says Morgan Meis, Flux Factory's president. Easier said that done.

Opening a door emblazoned with "Please Eat," I enter UK-based Prudence Emma Staite's suite, *Chocolate Room #6*. It's Willy Wonka's

wet dream. A white chocolate "rug" coats the floor. The baseboards are dark chocolate. Cocoa human fingers point at you from the walls. Decorative white candy mimics wallpaper. On ledges sit chocolate portraits of Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles, President Bush, and Michael Moore.

"I feel sick," says a cherubic brunette who noshed Michael Moore with gusto.

"Oh, I would love to eat the whole room," says a Japanese girl with a blue cap.

"I think I'm chewing on something that's not chocolate," says a mustachioed man. He bit the red wall, before he had a chance to realize that it's the only confection-free surface in the room.

I sample floorboards, fingers, George Bush's ear

and the footprint-free rug. Saving Moore for later, I find Staite. Her eyes are ringed dark—she's spent the week plastering and molding 80 pounds of cocoa. The white chocolate ceiling alone took six hours to trowel. But she's happy to hear the fingers are devoured and that the portraits have been munched. "I was interested to see who would eat who," Staite says. "Everyone loved the Queen—I even ate a bit. George Bush's eyes were poked out, though."

Needing a sweet respite, I find Miwa Koizumi. The Brooklyn-based artist has homemade liquor, a toothy grin and an array of frozen, capped tubes.

I unscrew the first tube and inhale lime-flavored nothingness. "That's called spirite d'air," she says. "It's

So how did you get into music? What inspired you, and how has this developed into the music you play today?

I grew up in a household where music was playing all the time. Although they don't play any instruments, both my parents are really into music. It's such a fundamental part of my personality that I can't tell you what attracts me to music. I know it is an acutely gratifying form of communication for me. I feel that honest communication is often discouraged in daily life. A lot of the time, I feel like I have to play a role that doesn't fit me, and that makes me feel very alienated. When I play music, I can escape that. I've found that I can flip the two concepts in my head, so that the "escape" feels more like reality than everyday life does. I've found a space where I feel truly free, where I find sincerity and candor work to my advantage.

So has punk culture motivated you?

I would definitely consider this a punk band. I'm really tired of the debates over what punk is and what it means. Punk rock as a style—fast guitars, spiky hair—is totally irrelevant to me. I want that to not exist. However, because that does exist, it's really important to me that I work hard to keep the *tradition* of punk alive. Through this band, I feel like I'm doing my part. It's not just about applying those ideals to music, it's important to challenge the status quo in real life.

like eating air."

I sample another chilly vial filled with amber fluid. It's reminiscent of sweet wino vodka. Next, a yellowish, liquid-filled tube. "I call this 'Golden Water,'" she says. "It's like drinking sunshine and rain water."

She hands me a mini-squirt bottle entitled "Grain Graine." A pomegranate seed sits on top. I squeeze and fruity liquor streams into my mouth. It's delicious.

The smell of cloves leads me to *Multiple Assisted Soup*, where guests are encouraged to season a simmering cauldron with available spices and root vegetables. When guests add ingredients, they must include it in the improvised "recipe" written on the wall. Two coffee beans, 12 dried chilies, one memory pill, and

a "grossly chopped leek" are among 100-odd additions.

"Would you like to try some?" asks Jean Barberis, a Fluxer wearing a floral-themed shirt.

I nod. He ladles a taste with a silver cup. "Careful, it's spicy," he says. I let the soup cool and peer into the pot. Several intact oranges peels bob at the surface.

I sip and cough. Barberis winces. "I could probably add coconut milk and save it."

At the very least, he has proved the theory that too many cooks do spoil the broth. Leaving Barberis, I enter a clearing covered with 20 or 30 Coke two-liters. A dark fluid boils on a burner. Copper piping snakes through ice water, dripping clear fluid into a beaker.

A lanky man in red pants

¶ For me punk doesn't just exist on a record or in a venue, it's a way of life that extends to the things I buy, the work I do, and how I treat the people around me. Punk is about trying to cut through the bullshit. Once you get past that, it's a lot easier to look at the world with a fresh perspective. I've found that it helps me put myself out there so that I can open myself up in a way that makes me feel very alive.

I think that's evident in your lyrics. They seem pretty direct expressions of communication. How important are they?

Well, lyrics are very important to us. We put a line in our first 7" that said we don't mind people copying it for their friends, all we ask is that you include a copy of the lyrics.

How do you view your songs in general?

If I just wanted to say "I'm really upset," I'd just do that. Maybe I'd shout it really loud, that might provide a release, but it wouldn't satisfy me in the same way. There's a huge distinction between *releasing* something and *expressing* it. When you write music, you have to combine basic human emotions and the aesthetics of song structure. You have to be constantly re-thinking and inventing these combinations, because the worst thing a song can be is predictable. A predictable song won't *move* anyone. —Jonathan Falcone

pours his distillation into Cuervo shot glasses. "You need to try this," Sebastien Sanz de Santamaria says, offering a shot of fermented Coke.

This is *Alcohol* by French artist Frederic Pradeau. His still morphs Coke—any sugary soda would suffice—into rotgut. The formula is simple: Add brewer's yeast to Coke, ferment for two weeks, then distill. The result "packs a punch," according to Santamaria.

I hold the shot to light. It's clear like moonshine. I shut my eyes and gulp. It tastes like water.

Santamaria admits he didn't get the result that he was hoping for, "The fermentation didn't work so well. The artist forgot to tell us the Coke had to be flat."

Sadly sober, I exit onto a

balcony. The night is black, save for a candle-lit path leading to a curtained room. Staite and a woman wearing cat-eye glasses are puffing cigarettes. The curtained room opens and the wall-biter from the chocolate exhibit exits. Buttoning his jeans, he says, "Nope, couldn't pull the trigger."

This final stop is the bathroom, complete with old Fortune magazines, cigars and Fresh 'N Up wipes. Here, The Flux Factory will collect the waste of the people who attended the exhibit and use the results to fertilize tomatoes at a Catskills farm. When the tomatoes ripen, Staite will send them to the participants to thank them for supporting the arts.

—Joshua M Bernstein ©

Find out more about the Flux Factory's

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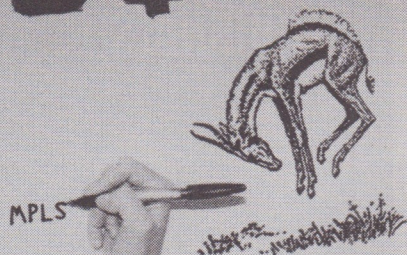
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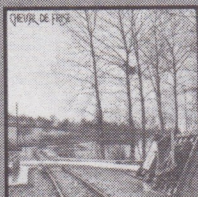
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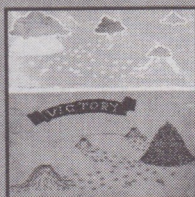


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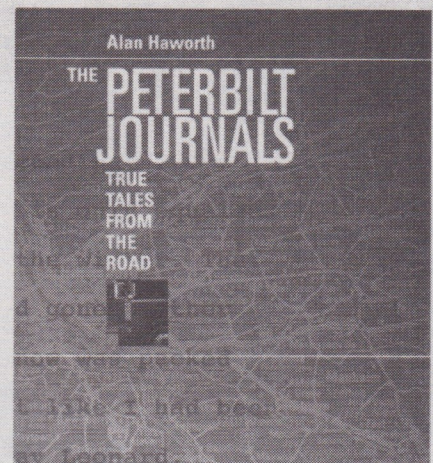
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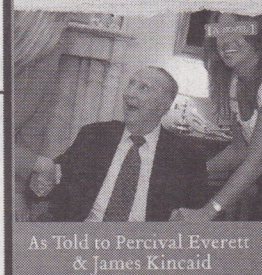
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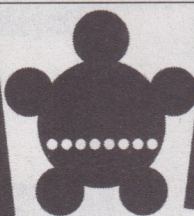
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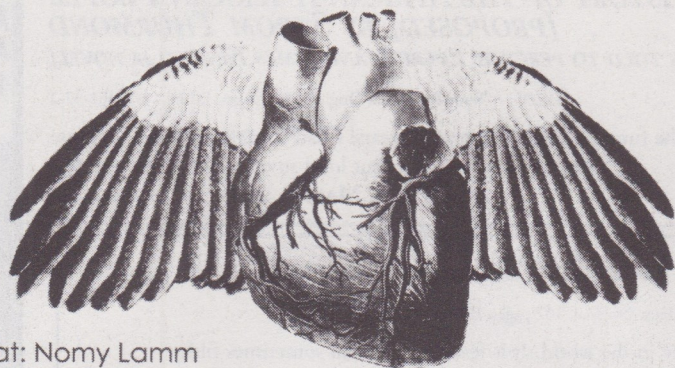
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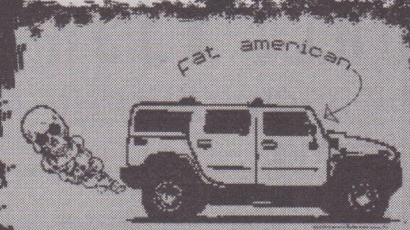
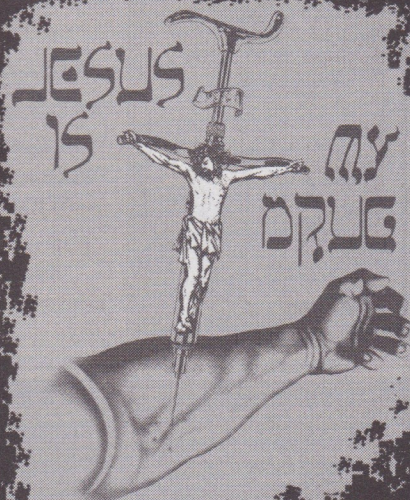
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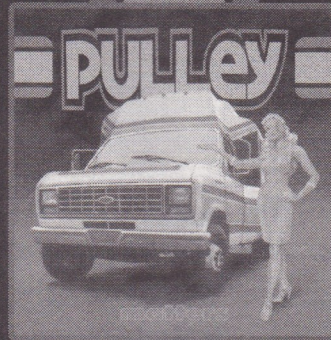
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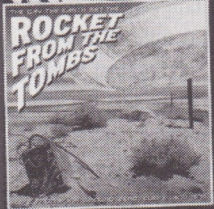
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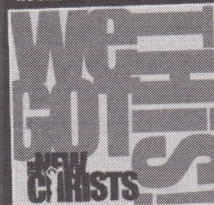
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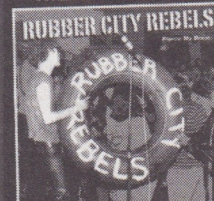
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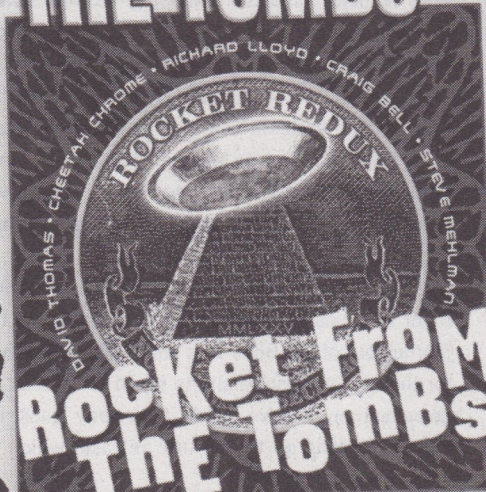
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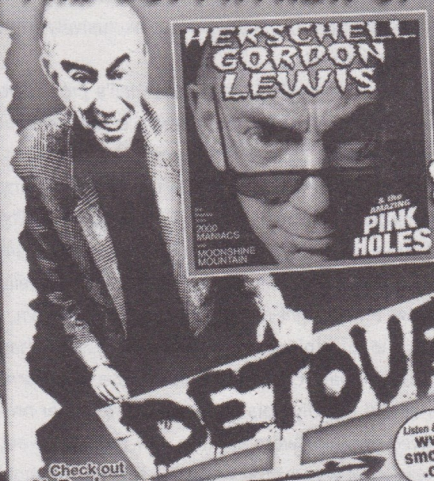


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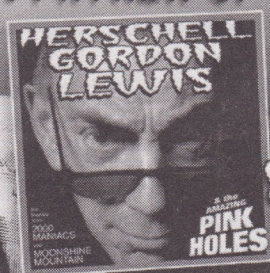
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the gossip

I think that us becoming a band had more to do with the fact that we're really good friends. It seems that our "working relationship"—if you can even call it that—grew organically out of that our friendships. We don't have to *try* to play music, it happens as naturally as a conversation does.

Fuck the sun: If modern science could find a way to harness the Gossip's red-hot intensity, we'd solve the energy crisis in no time. When they play live, they unleash a sonic demolition derby of stormy, gospel-fueled punk that could blow the back wall off any room. There's no place for skepticism when the Gossip play. Thirty minutes is all it takes for this Southern-born trio to turn an otherwise skeptical crowd into a horde of frenzied fans, soaked to the skin with the kind of sweat and lust that is made exclusively from the purest passion rock'n'roll has to offer.

When Beth Ditto's orgasmic vocals, Nathan Howdeshell's propulsive guitar riffs, and Kathy Mendonca's merciless drum beats come together into one wild, untamed roar, it's hard to believe that forming this band wasn't a part of their master plan. In 1998 they were just three friends itching to break away from the oppressive humdrum of rural Arkansas. When the opportunity to head for Olympia, Washington—the birthplace of Riot Girl and the breeding ground for trailblazers like Calvin Johnson and Stella Marrs—they packed their bags and bought a one-way ticket out of town.

When the trio arrived, the Olympia music scene was quieter than usual. Ditto, the Gossip's frontwoman, compares it to the eye of a hurricane. Most of the bands that had put Olympia on the map had either broken up, taken a break, moved away, or were starting new projects. New, younger blood was on its way in. It was a time when the town as a whole seemed to be retooling, rethinking, and reinventing itself. Ditto, Howdeshell and Mendonca were no exceptions to that rule. They had always dreamed that one day, they'd live in place where art and music could flourish and grow. To these three small-town kids, it seemed like creativity was around every corner, tucked away in every nook, even busting through the cracks in the sidewalk.

After searching and experimenting in their new surroundings the trio finally realized that the perfect recipe for rock'n'roll had been under their nose the whole time. And with that, they formed the Gossip. Now the band, along with a whole new slew of other exciting acts from Olympia, have ushered in a new era of authentic revolutionary rock. And it's taking the whole country by storm.

As is often the case when faced with something they don't understand, mainstream rock critics have mis-categorized and misjudged the Gossip from the beginning. They've accused the band of contributing to that sold-out, shallow, designer-brand prodigal son of punk: garage rock. They've been lumped in with high-fashion quasi-indie bands like the Hives, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, and the White Stripes but, other than volume, the Gossip's 100 percent Grade A DIY style has little in common with those bands. You don't hear the Hives wailing war against heterosexism. The White Stripes don't scream for the revolution. And the Yeah Yeah Yeahs have never taken a gospel hymn, and turned it into a lusty homage to lesbian love as sung by a big, beautiful femme. Make no mistake: the Gossip is no fucking garage band. The Gossip are their own movement; their own masters.

I caught up with Ditto, Mendonca, and Howdeshell in the basement of Chicago's Bottom Lounge where we talked about their long journey out of the Bible Belt and how they've made a new, exciting life for themselves despite all the tough times that came before. Since our conversation, they've made their way back into the studio where they're working on their fourth release, which you can expect to see sometime this fall.

Interview by **Cate Levinson**

Photos by **Andrew Ballantyne**



Did you all grow up in the same town in Arkansas?

Nathan: Kathy and I went to high school together, but we were all friends when we were teenagers.

Beth: I think by the time we reached 17, we were all friends.

How did you all end up in Olympia? It's a long way from Arkansas.

Nathan: Kathy moved to go to college at Evergreen, and I wanted to move somewhere because I hated Arkansas, and then Beth followed shortly after that with another one of our friends from Arkansas.

Why did you hate it so much?

Beth: I grew up in Judsonia; they grew up in Searcy. Judsonia is a town of about 2000 people. It's just a small, stop-on-the-road, backwater town, and it's backwards in that slow, Southern sort of way. I graduated in a class of 65 kids, and that was with three schools consolidated. I knew *everybody* and I was related to half the town. I think Searcy is similar, only it's slightly bigger. The two towns are right next to each other. We'd go to Searcy to do our grocery shopping; there's a Walmart there.

So moving from there to a college town like Olympia I'm sure a lot of things were different, but there must have been some similarities too.

Beth: Well it was weird, because Searcy was a college town . . .

Kathy: Yeah, but a *really* different kind of college town.

How so?

Kathy: There's a really conservative private Christian school in Searcy, so it's not a college town in the same way that Olympia is a college town.

Nathan: The College had MTV pulled off the cable because they thought it was satanic.

Kathy: They had *a lot* of influence.

Nathan: They were like the Masons of White County. They owned *everything*.

Beth: And not just in Searcy, but all throughout White County. We couldn't get MTV in Judsonia either.

When you were growing up there, was it

always the plan to leave? Did you ever think you were going to live there forever?

Beth: Staying in Judsonia was *never* an option. I always knew I wanted to leave, it was just a matter of deciding where to go.

Nathan: I always knew that I wanted to leave Arkansas. I was like two and I was saying, "I have to get out of here." I thought I would end up going somewhere closer, like Memphis, but the first chance that came up after high school, I was like, "Olympia will do, I'll go there." I don't think any of us felt comfortable in Arkansas our whole lives.

Beth: I think if you're weird in a town like Searcy you know from day one that you are going to have to find somewhere else to live. And I don't think that's only in Arkansas, I think that happens anywhere that's small and conservative . . .

Nathan: . . . and boring.

Beth: Even when I was a little kid, I looked around and I said to myself, "These people are insane." You really feel like you're separated from the rest of the world. And it's not just because it's small and boring, but you don't have that much freedom. The town was run by the wealthiest people and the college, and they were all very conservative Christians. They had a lot of influence and it runs your life in a way. They make the laws, which means you can't avoid the influence they have in your day-to-day experience. I didn't even live in Searcy, but if the college objected to something we wanted to do in my school—and this is my high school mind you—we couldn't do it, end of story.

Nathan: The College was just like the *Wizard of Oz*.

Beth: Totally: "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain."

Was it difficult to get some perspective in a town like that? When that's all you have to work with and they have control over what you learn, and hear and watch, how do you get to the point where you're like "this is crazy"?

Kathy: When I moved, I actually didn't know that there was a place I'd be happy. I knew I wasn't happy where I was, but I didn't move because I knew I would be happy somewhere else—I just knew that I didn't belong in Searcy. It was really hard to

move. It wasn't like I got to Olympia and was like, "I feel so much better now." It just made it possible to know I could make a life for myself in a new place.

Nathan: In a place like Searcy, if you're interested in art or music you don't have that many options. I always knew that I wanted to play in a fun band with people I liked, but I was stuck in this crappy punk band with these dudes that I couldn't relate to all that well. It wasn't fulfilling. Don't get me wrong, I did have a lot of fun, but if I was still there and still doing the same thing, I would die.

Beth: The thing is that there are people still doing it there; there's this little tiny scene, and it's totally turned into a Christian scene. All of us were Christian then because we didn't really know any better.

Nathan: It was not even that we were willing Christians—the Lord just had us whipped.

Beth: We were *totally* Lord-whipped.

Kathy: There were certain things that we would never do, and things that we would never ever consider doing.

Beth: I said "goddamn" for the first time when I was like 18.

Kathy: Yeah, and we weren't even avid churchgoers or anything.

So how has that changed?

Kathy: It's *completely* different. I don't live in fear. I don't stay up all night worrying that I'll go to hell.

Beth: I don't sit around worrying that the Rapture could happen at any moment anymore. Although, I have to admit that every so often I catch myself thinking about it, and I realize *how* deep it goes. We were at the farmer's market in Olympia, and there was this jazz band getting ready to play. I didn't see them at first, and all of a sudden this guy tooted on his trumpet really loud—I almost fainted. I thought it was Gabriel's horn and it was the end of the world.

Nathan: I'm *still* obsessed with the end of the world.

Beth: It's not just me, right? I mean, when you grow up with people telling you that God is planning this . . .

THE GOSPEL

At the time it seemed as if so many people were looking to do something new, so it was a good time to use our imagination to put together a sound that would excite us, and it struck a chord with the people around us. We were in the right place at the right time.

—Beth Ditto



Nathan: The Rapture is so psychedelic.

Back up for a second. I was raised in a totally secular Jewish family—I once had to ask my friend what day Christmas was and she looked at me as if I had just swallowed her cat—what is the Rapture?

Kathy: Christians believe—I should say, some Christians believe—that God has this grand plan to, one day out of the blue, call all the Christians up to heaven. All the other people, the non-Christians, are left here on Earth where they'll have to live through seven years . . .

Nathan: . . . Of crazy, insane torture . . .

Kathy: . . . and plagues.

Nathan: And you can't end it. You can't even kill yourself.

You're still alive through all this?

Kathy: Yeah. This isn't what they think happens after you die, this could happen at any moment. And, well if you're not Christian, yes, you stay down here, and you have to live through hell on Earth.

Beth: There are 144,000 people who God selected in advance, who immediately get shipped up to heaven. I think they have some sort of birthmark which is their ticket. After

those seven years, Earth becomes heaven; it's consolidated into heaven proper somehow.

Nathan: Think about how small a number that is: How big is the population right now? It's several *billion*. And you can't die. If you take a gun and shoot yourself, you won't die. I remember reading it in the Bible: *They'll try to throw themselves off a cliff, but they'll stand up and walk*. They don't die because they have to endure the torture.

Beth: Listen to us!

They taught this to you when you were little kids? I would have been *terrified*!

Beth: It's *really* scary. Little kids really absorb it. ¶ When we were little, we'd say, "I love you in God's way" or, "we're sisters in God's way." Isn't that such a weird thing for kids to say to each other?

What the hell does that mean?

Beth: *I know!* What the hell?! Can you imagine how weird that must look: A bunch of little girls, jumping rope or whatever, saying, "I love you . . . in God's way." Kathy and I used to joke about that later on.

Nathan: You were all, "Hey, were not lesbians, we love each other in God's way, not in a lesbian way." That's *too* funny.

Beth: That's exactly what it was: "I love you, but not in that lesbian way . . . let's just be friends."

Kathy: You'd only say that to your friends.

Beth: You could also say, "We're sisters, in God's way. We're all brothers and sisters in God's way." *In God's way?!!*

Nathan: That must be where they got the idea for *Children of the Corn*.

Sorry, I'm a little speechless. That's a completely different world than the one I grew up in.

Beth: It's very much a Southern thing. We all went to different churches that were miles and miles away from each other, but we all grew up Southern Baptist. They all have this approach to little kids.

So how did you get from that to being able to look at it from the perspective you have now? Was it difficult to get to this point?

Beth: To denounce God? It was one of the hardest things I've ever done. My mom taught me—and my mom isn't really what I would consider a strict Christian—that the only unforgivable sin is to say there is no God. And yet one day I realized that I just *didn't* believe in God and Christianity. I was really scared to admit it and *terrified* to say it

out loud. It probably took me a year before I would say, "Fuck God. What is that shit about?" I have friends that still believe in God, and I try to be respectful. I truly feel that spirituality is an important part of life; I feel that some denominations and other religions entail some really amazing, beautiful practices and beliefs.

Nathan: I'm really obsessed with the Bible as literature.

Beth: I'm totally obsessed with Revelations; it's wild and crazy. The thing that still gets to me about the Bible is that if you really read it and dig into it, you realize, "Wait a minute, Jesus was a radical." I think it was really good for me to go back and read it myself because it gave me the perspective that I really needed. The way that we were raised, was not at all radical and didn't encourage the kind of thought that I think is the essential message in the text. Even now we get on the subject and we can go on and on about it because we know so much about it. It was *so much* a part of our upbringing.

Nathan: It was *engrained* in us from day one.

Beth: It's so engrained in the culture.

When you left Arkansas was that part of what you were trying to get away from?

Beth: I had a sense that it would happen. When I started questioning my sexuality, I began to feel out of place in church. But what really pushed me away from that was that I started thinking about feminism. I stopped going to church when I was 13 because they were arguing with me about abortion and threatening me with hellfire and brimstone. I was a 13-year-old kid and they were trying to scare me into going along with it and at that age I wasn't buying it. I said, "Dude, I'm done with this." That's when things started to change for me. I started to question their authority, what they were about, and how they were influencing my whole life and the lives of the people around me. That's when it all started to seem like brainwashing. The fact that you weren't allowed to question them was not OK with me. Even when it came to small things like cussing or a girl wanting to play football, somehow they could always bring it back to the Bible.

Nathan: They'd feed you a hearty dose of Christian guilt.

Kathy: I went to church with my family when I was little, but I ran into problems at around the same age. My church was huge; it was all white and very rich.

Beth: Your church was *crazy* rich.

Kathy: And my family was *really* poor. We were the one poor family that went there, which made my parents feel a little like outcasts. When I was little, all my friends were from my neighborhood, and they were all black. I used to invite them to come to church with me and the congregation used to get so mad at my parents, saying it was their fault that there were black girls singing in the choir. That's why I stopped going to church.

How did your parents feel about that?

Kathy: My parents were really into the idea that church was a place where everyone was welcome, so they were kind of pissed. But at the same time, they didn't want any more trouble, and so they were like, "Maybe this just isn't the right church to bring your friends to."

Beth: It's really hard to learn how to deal with the way our families deal with race or racism. You know that it's bad for my parents or Kathy's parents to be racist or go along with racism, but they only know what they know; it's only understandable when you realize that there's never been any other way. It's so entrenched in all the hierarchies and all the shit that goes into it in every aspect of life. This is your home, a small little town, where your friends, classmates, teachers, everyone is close to you. You don't know any other way, you don't really know any other people, and that means that their authority has a real hold on you. That carries on throughout your entire life. On top of that they're invoking the name of God; you can't ask them to denounce their God.

When you moved to Olympia, did you know that it was basically the exact the opposite of Searcy? Were you looking for a community that was really different socially and politically, or did it have more to do with the music?

Beth: They were the people and the music

that we really admired when we were 14 and 15. Even now I really don't mind when we get lumped in with that scene as a band. I think we really belong there. People always try to say that we're garage rock, but that scene is so *plastic*. Some dude in a band has tight jeans, dyed black hair and a starving girlfriend with bangs, and people call it indie rock. It's so gross. It's not new, or wild, or even sincere; it's not even fun. Olympia isn't like that at all. It's never been a place where you can pull that kind of shit. ¶ So, yes, we were drawn there because of the music, but it was so much more than that. First of all, Kathy went out there to go to Evergreen, but I think that the town was also a factor for her. When Nathan and I visited her there, we never wanted to leave—it was a really exciting time. When we moved there, the scene was going through a lot of transition. Because it's a college town, there are always some new people coming in and other people leaving, so the people who live there respond to that in a very cool way. The people there are very down-to-earth and open. The community is very accepting whether you're queer, fat, a woman, a person of color, you just don't get the shit treatment that you do in other places. It's very liberating. I'm really grateful that I had the opportunity to immerse myself in that kind of community, where no one treated me like I should apologize for any of that. It's like a weird alternative reality. You cannot get away with being a bigot in that town; they'll ride you out on a rail. We've had so much support from the people in Olympia, not just because of the Gossip, but also as people. We made such good friends there. I feel like I have family there. ¶ I don't think there's any way we'd be a band if we had been anywhere else. At the time it seemed as if so many people were looking to do something new, so it was a good time to use our imagination to put together a sound that would excite us, and it struck a chord with the people around us. We were in the right place at the right time. I think that's why it feels so effortless. Olympia is such a good place for that because there's no pressure.

When you moved to Olympia, were you roommates?



I always knew that I wanted to leave Arkansas. I was like two and I was saying, "I have to get out of here." I thought I would end up going somewhere closer, like Memphis, but the first chance that came up after high school, I was like, "Olympia will do, I'll go there." I don't think any of us felt comfortable in Arkansas our whole lives.

—Nathan Howdeshell

Kathy: Yes

Is that how you started the band?

Nathan: That just sort of happened one day in the basement. I was playing in a different band and we had just finished practice, but I was still just playing and Kathy came down and started playing the drums.

Beth: I think I was in the kitchen making Ramen and they came out of the basement and said I should come down and sing.

Would you have formed a band if you hadn't been living together?

Kathy: I think that us becoming a band had more to do with the fact that we're really good friends. It seems that our "working relationship"—if you can even call it that—grew organically out of that our friendships. We don't have to *try* to play music, it happens as naturally as a conversation does.

Nathan: It's weird to me because I always thought that in order to do all the work that it takes to put together a band—to find people who could write and play music together, to spend time practicing, to take it on the road, to record an album—would take so much planning. I thought you would have to have a picture in your head of how to make that work, but it just all fell into

place. Writing songs has that same sort of flow. We all do our part: I make up a guitar part, Kathy makes up a drum part, and Beth sings a melody and lyrics, and it all fits. That's how it goes every time.

Beth: We had so much time on our hands. When your rent is \$90 a month, you don't have to work more than three days a week, so you have a lot of time to hang out and make art or pursue whatever interests you. Check out the Olympia scene now and you'll see that there's this whole new wave of music, art, and politics going on. I don't think Olympia will *ever* be a dead town. I'd bet good money that when this phase is over and the people who are there now start to move on, a new generation will take over.

Do you guys still live together?

Kathy: No. Actually we didn't live together for very long, only about six months.

Nathan: Beth and I live together.

Beth: And Kathy doesn't live far away.

Kathy: We don't live in Olympia anymore, either. We moved to Portland. It took a really long time for some reason. *[laughs]* It took me *months*.

Beth: Nathan and me, we did it all in one day . . .

Nathan: . . . Kamikaze style.

Beth: It was like "Let's put all our shit in a truck, take it to the dumpster . . ."

Nathan: . . . If it doesn't all fit we'll just throw it off a cliff and drive off.

Beth: We didn't have anything that was worth saving. We had like eight shitty, squatter-punk couches.

Nathan: Our friend Jerry is a trashy couch collector; he loves garbage that you can sit on. It got to the point that you couldn't walk through our apartment because of all the broken couches. And they were all broken in the same way . . .

Beth: . . . like someone dropped a cannonball on them over and over again. When you sat on them, you could feel the floor under your butt. I put my foot down with this new apartment. ¶ Beyond the actual moving, it was a tough transition because Portland is a much bigger place. In Portland, Kathy's in school so she has a lot going on, and Nathan has really close friends there, he lived there for a little while. In Olympia, everyone knows everyone. It's not a city, it's a small town, and there's no anonymity. It's the kind of town that every time you turn the corner, there's a 90 percent chance that you'll run into someone you know. That isn't the case in Portland.

Portland is a pretty small city, but compared to Olympia, it's a much bigger place.

Beth: It's probably the biggest town that I'll ever live in.

Nathan: In retrospect, moving to Olympia was just moving from a very small town to a bigger small town. But when I first got there I thought it was *massive*.

Kathy: It seemed like a huge city to me, too.

Nathan: When you go from the west side to downtown, it looks like a big city. There are these two skyscrapers . . .

Beth: They're only about 10 stories high—they have those big poles sticking out of them like a skyscraper does—but compared to Searcy, where the two tallest buildings were the hospital and the Ford dealership, it was pretty intimidating. When I got to Olympia, I was blown away by the buses. I made Kathy and Jerry take the bus with me to work because I was scared I'd get lost. In my wildest dreams, I never imagined I'd be taking a bus to work. When I was little, I dreamed I'd live in New York someday, but in all that time I never imagined how I was going to get anywhere. I remember thinking I'd be fine in New York because I could sleep through anything. But I didn't think of any of the other details.

Kathy: I always envisioned myself living in a more exciting place, but the idea of a big city scared me.

Beth: I've calmed down, but it wasn't easy to adjust.

Beth, did you come out before you left Arkansas, or was that something that opened up for you after you left?

Beth: I came out to my mom when I was about 15, but I told her I was bisexual because I was really confused about my life. By the time I was 18, I had come out to almost everyone else in my life. When I came out to my best friend from high school, she was like, "My perfect little world just crumbled"—that's an exact quote.

Nathan: She said that?! Her "perfect little world"? What perfect little world was she talking about?

Beth: She had it in her head that we would get married and have families and live next

door to each other for the rest of our lives. Mind you, we were like 16 at the time, but that was her idea of the perfect life.

Nathan: That's such a demented fantasy.

Kathy: That's how they envision utopia in the South.

Nathan: That's what they want out of life: to hang out with their best friend and get pregnant. In a perfect world, everyone would be like, "Look at us we live next door and we're best friends. We're living the dream . . ."

Beth: "...we're 45—yee-ha!" That best friend married my older brother. That happened to my mother, too: her best friend from when she was a little girl married my uncle. It's a little weird and a little incestuous.

Nathan: But sometimes you have no other options, so you may as well marry your best friend's brother.

Did that kind of thing freak you out when you were younger, or was it so common that it seemed normal then?

Beth: I was really freaked out then—when I think about it now, I think it was because I had a crush on her and it broke my heart. I was hurt. I wouldn't talk to her in school; I couldn't even look at her after she said that to me. It was really confusing to me. It wasn't until I started hearing similar stories from other people who'd had crushes on their best friends that I was like, "Wait a minute. That happened to me too." That's when I started to understand why I had that reaction: I had a *huge* crush on her. Now she's the mother of my nephews and they're beautiful. I think it's hard for her to be a mom at such a young age. She just turned 22 and she's about to have another baby, but overall I think she's happy. ¶ Anyway, I think the point of that story was that I came out when I was 18. I came out to Kathy as bisexual when I first met her. Our friend Jerry was a very out fag when I met him and that's what drew me to him—he came out to me before I came out to him. We were talking on the phone when I first met him, and I asked, "Jerry, are you gay?" He said, "Yes" and I was all "Oh my God!" I think I came out to him a couple months later, but it was so exciting to find someone who would admit it. He was openly gay in high school.

Nathan: I always forget that—that was *nuts*.

Beth: I think a lot of kids who feel out of place, whether they're queer or not, were drawn to the weirdness in people. Being queer definitely made you an outsider, but it was the same for a kid who was a punk, a raver, artistic, or just different. We were magnetically drawn to those kids. ¶ It was easier for me to do that at my high school because it was so small. I sought out the nerdiest people I could find and I surrounded myself with a circle of good, nerdy friends. I never understood how the popular kids had that status, it makes no sense—there are so many more nerdy kids than popular kids. The same with rich kids, why were they so cool? There were only about five rich families and everyone else was dirt fucking poor—why did they always get the attention? Senior year, I campaigned to get geeky kids elected to be the king and queen of the prom, and it worked. *They won*. That's how I got through it: By making trouble. And I would seek out really flamboyant boys and I would talk to them about being gay. I came out to them and they came out to me and, by the end of high school, I had some really close fag friends. I needed people who I felt would support me, and who I could support. But at the same time, looking back, I always kept my distance. I didn't go too far out on a limb because it's hard when you're 14, 15, or 17 to come out and say, "I like girls." You need to be careful because you don't know who's completely trustworthy. Even if they say they do too, you need to be careful.

Kathy: High school was totally traumatic. I was a band geek, so at least I had a place, but it was pretty terrible.

Nathan: I honestly think that it almost destroyed my psyche. Now, I think that I was lucky in that respect because I'm not one of those people who wishes they could be young again.

Beth: Fuck that.

Nathan: I hated being young. I associate it with all the worst things in life: getting picked on relentlessly, having no choices, all the rules that you have to follow, living in a shitty town. I am so glad that I didn't

Kathy Mendonca:

High School was totally traumatic. I was a band geek, so at least I had a place, but it was pretty terrible.

Nathan: I honestly think that it almost destroyed my psyche.

Beth: Fuck that.



grow up to be one of those people who thinks of high school as their heyday.

Can you channel that same creative energy even though you've been out of high school for a long time?

Nathan: The thing is that it didn't end when high school ended. People still want you to fit into a neat little group. They want these neat music genres and subgenres, and it *still* pisses me off. I feel like people try to put bands in these neat little piles, and I feel like we've been lumped into a group that we don't really belong. ¶ When we were doing interviews for the last record, about a year and half ago, it was horrible because everyone would make all these references to the Hives, the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the White Stripes. It drove me *nuts*—why the Hives? To me, the Hives are the biggest joke in the world. They're so full of shit.

Beth: I couldn't tell you a single song of theirs. I don't have anything to say to those people. I can't sit down and have a real conversation with any of them. At least when we've played with the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, I've had a lot of fun hanging out with them. I make a distinction between them and the Hives, I think there's something interesting about the way that they play.

Nathan: But regardless, they're in a whole different world than we are.

Beth: And that's what so weird about us being lumped in with this group of bands.

Nathan: When that happens, I get that same feeling that I got in high school. I think this band totally retains that spirit and that energy—maybe that's why it works so well.

Beth: That's totally true. Since we all have that shared experience, it makes sense that we make such a good combination.

Nathan: When we were in high school, we needed to draw distinctions between us and everyone around us because we *hated* everyone around us. We wanted to be the opposite of them, and we wanted everyone around us to know that we were a completely different entity. That's still in us as a band. That goes for the bands that we play with, the bands that we're into, and the way that we feel about our band.

Beth: That's so true. It's our new way to separate ourselves from the cool kids. It feels so similar. We work really hard to be what we are and to express what we want to how we want to. We don't want to be a part of what's "cool" any more than we did when we were in high school. We don't want to do what everyone else is doing just so that we

can be part of the cool group, we're *still* rebelling against that shit.

Nathan: We deal with this a lot. Everybody wants you to be part of a group. In high school, you're a part of the jock group or the band geeks or whatever. And when you're a band, you're in either in the punk scene, the hip-hop scene, the hardcore scene, or the garage rock scene. The list goes on and on—everyone wants to be able to categorize you. They love it if you match one specific group and everything looks perfect because it all fits together neat and pretty.

Beth: And they want you to act the part, and look the part.

Nathan: And I think that we know how to deal with that because it carried over from high school. Forming this band was an organic experience; maybe we fell into it because that experience and attitude has defined each one of us as people. We don't even have to talk about it, or even think about it; it's a tacit understanding between the three of us. It's funny to think about it now, because all that high school shit started a lot of creativity in me. The things that we would say and do still make me laugh. It was pure rebellion in any form we could think of, and it was so much fun. We hated where we were, and we knew it wasn't us, so the point was to give them hell. ©

After a recent show in Denver, a young, bearded fan approached David Pajo—Papa M for those of you who have not been keeping track—and offered him some money.

"This is for all the music that I've downloaded from you."

"Keep it," Pajo replied.

Not satisfied, the bearded fan opened a bag full of pills—"Well, can I give you some pills or something?"

"No, man," Pajo laughed, turning him down. "Really, I do the same thing."

As Pajo tells the story at a café on Manhattan's Lower East Side, I laugh. After all, it's a funny story. But it's also a subtle reminder that the people that make the records are fans too. Pajo is no exception. Our breakfast meeting was supposed to be an interview, but we talked as much about other people's music as we did about his. At the end of the interview, Pajo apologized sheepishly, "Sorry for rambling. I'm afraid it's going to be all about the Mekons and Dylan."

Just a few years ago the apology would have surprised me. After all, it's a mighty long toss from Dylan's *Self Portrait* to Slint's

quirky folk songs are a perfect soundtrack for the Louisville of my mind—he left his long-time home and headed for New York City with little more than his guitar.

Interview by **Jeff Guntzel**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

Why move to New York City?

Just to play music and be around friends. I mostly wanted to get out of Louisville. Of all the friends that I grew up with, there are only a few left there that are still playing music. I'd been there for so long, I just wanted to go somewhere. Every time I come here, the culture is just slammed into your face. There's always so much going on. I needed some of that; I need a year of that.

Are you working on Papa M music?

Right now I'm working on stuff that I think is going to be solo stuff, but I don't know if I'm going to call it Papa M or not. The new stuff sounds so good that I was thinking of doing it under another name. *[laughs]*

When you first started using the name, it

I think I'm getting back into that again. ¶ I got really into traditional music for a while there, which I'm still into. But trying to write traditional type songs, like verse-chorus type songs, doesn't really come naturally to me.

Really?

Yeah, it's really hard.

Are you singing on the stuff you're working on now?

Yeah, there's a little bit of that. That's actually the hardest part. The lyrics and all that just drive me insane—it just doesn't come naturally to me.

That surprises me. You sing with an almost effortless voice. You make it seem easy!

It's just hard to get me to do it. I don't trust my own voice.

Were you scared the first time you sang on a recording?

Yeah.

PAPA M

I realize I'm not interested in being in the pop music world at all. That's not my world.

Spiderland. Pajo played guitar in the Louisville band that—according to whom you ask—changed everything or just changed a lot. A few years later he joined up with Tortoise in Chicago and made two records. He has been called to play with Stereolab, Royal Trux, and longtime Louisville compadre Will Oldham.

All along—for a decade now—Pajo has been making his own music under variations of the moniker "M." There was "M is the Thirteenth Letter," "Aerial M," and more recently "Papa M." The vast majority of the "M" releases were of the liquid, ethereal variety familiar to Slint or Tortoise fans. Then he started singing, and everything changed.

With his recent Papa M recordings, Pajo has invented a kind of otherworldly folk music. He takes freely from a rich tradition, but leaves something entirely his own.

And at a time when you'd think being based in Louisville made the most sense—his

seemed like it was a way of carving out, or discovering, your identity. What does it say about that process when you are ready to be something other than Papa M?

When it started out, I wanted to do my own thing and I wanted to do it all myself—I wanted to play all the instruments; I wanted to record it. I didn't know anything about recording or microphones, I was just going to teach myself. Then I got excited about singing and trying to write songs with words. And then I got more into electronica type stuff. It seems like it's always changing. It's almost like I get bored really easy or something.

And are you changing again?

I don't know how it's going to end up, but right now the songs are getting more dissonant again. When I was younger I was into anti-melodies: melodies that were unusual.

Did you run it by friends?

Yeah, I recorded it myself on a Walkman. I think I played it for Will [Oldham] and he really liked it and thought it should be on the single I was doing, so I put it on there. I never even thought about singing and then I thought, "Well, this is a territory that I've never really messed with, maybe I should try it." I have tons of tapes of me singing that I'd never release.

Now you sing on most of your songs. When did the confidence creep in?

It was actually *Papa M Sings*, which was recorded right after a long tour where I was playing all instrumental stuff. Most of the bands that were opening for us were instrumental, too. So I came home and sang on all these cover songs and I liked it. I'm still trying to figure it out.



What do you mean?

I'm trying to figure out a balance where it's not so obviously based on folk music, but still true to the type of songs that I grew up with.

What is your relationship with more traditional folk music? I'm guessing it came into your life long before it came into your music.

Definitely. Country music is huge in Kentucky, and growing up there you hear it everywhere. I always listened to Johnny Cash and Hank Williams while I was listening to all of this really weird experimental music as a kid. It was always there, but it always seemed like old man music to me. Now I realize that most of my favorite people were really into all that stuff. Led Zeppelin made sense when I heard Robert Johnson; Johnny Cash made sense when I heard Jimmie Rodgers. It was just a way to piece together other peoples' influences.

What about in the last few years? Did you go through a big folk phase that brought on this stuff?

I was always into it, but I think it was working with Will [Oldham] on *Ease Down the Road* when I realized that I wanted to study the song structure and the mythology of folk music. I always liked it externally—just to listen to—but I'd never really gone in and really felt like I'd looked at it. I wanted to make a record that was similar to the kind of stuff I was listening to. I guess I just ended up stealing a bunch of stuff.

I really freaked out over folklorist Alan Lomax's field recordings when they were re-issued about seven years ago. I'd always liked folk music, but I was surprised at how much I loved those recordings. They were imperfect and they were sometimes hard to understand, but they were so intimate and so personal. It didn't feel like commerce at all because it wasn't commerce. To me there is an element of that in the singles series you've been doing. Do you hear it?

That series is definitely a selfish thing. I'm only doing it for myself, but at the same time I think it's cool that there are people drawing from these really old influences and, in a way, kind of keeping it alive. I'm taking lyrics from these old traditional songs that have been around forever and

doing it my own way. It's just a way to keep it alive and keep it evolving. ¶ Sometimes I hear those old folk songs and they tell a story that totally resonates. I can't really get away from it. Even though I know a lot of those musicians were doing it for money, their music is really pure. Nowadays everything that's done, the intentions are kind of questionable.

But then, rather incongruously, you just spent two years in a band with Billy Corgan from the Smashing Pumpkins. What was it like to immerse yourself in that world?

It was really cool and bizarre. It was something that I definitely wanted to do. I felt like I'd played in the indie-rock world for so long that I knew it inside and out. I wanted something to turn me upside down, and it sure did that. It was cool to see it, but it's even cooler to not be in it anymore. I realize I'm not interested in being in the pop music world at all. That's not my world.

Did you know how far it would go?

It started off as this thing that was Zwan. There was no record commitment and no touring commitment. Once we had the idea to make a record, it all turned upside down. That's when all the bullshit started. Then it became a business and it was no longer this fun thing.

Why did it become a business?

Because Billy wanted the band to compete on a pop level with other pop artists, whereas the intention of the band wasn't to do that at all. The intention was just to make music. I think that sort of corrupted the whole thing. Once we made the record, I got to see the other side of the music world—the aggressive, greedy, bullying, corporate part of it that I'd always heard about, but thought that people were sort of exaggerating. But it is pretty brutal, that whole world, and it makes me appreciate that I can make records through Drag City—stuff that I love—on a really simple level. There are no contracts with Drag City, everything's handshake. There are no advances. We never try to overspend. In the major label world, they spend the money in all the wrong places. So it was a good experience, because I realized what I *don't* want out of music.

But you must have expected some of it.

That's what's interesting—there *wasn't* really any expectation. When I first played with them, it was like, "Will you play with us on these shows?" They were small club shows. Then we spent a couple months writing some really cool songs—really amazing songs. But when the idea came up for a record and all the cool songs got pushed aside for the dumber pop songs.

How was that decision made?

It was . . . I don't want to blame anybody.

I'm just wondering about the process.

Billy wanted to make a pop album. The way he kept me interested was he said we'll do a pop album to establish ourselves, and then we'll do our experimental record afterward. About halfway through the pop album, I was like, "Why am I doing this? I can make my experimental record *now*."

So where was Papa M during all of this? You must have been pretty busy.

The one cool thing is that Billy *does* work really hard. I ended up not having any time for Papa M! That's why I started the single series. I was still writing stuff on my own and I'd have these brief moments to record. We'd have a day off in New York and I'd book a studio for the day and record whatever I have. The only way I could keep Papa M active was to put out a single of like three songs every two months or so.

It's a great idea.

I'm glad I did it. I knew the production was going to be iffy, that it was going to be all over the place. But it's kind of like a scrapbook—an audio tour diary. ¶ It was funny because Zwan was really loud music. But the songs I was writing, like those tour diary singles, were pretty quiet. When I had time away from Zwan I really wanted to do the exact opposite.

The songs on the singles really do sound like a reaction to something, was it kind of an escape for you?

Yeah, totally. It was definitely therapy, though I didn't think of it like that at the time. I guess at the time I just thought, "This is the kind of music I want to hear right now," so that's what I made. But I

didn't realize until after Zwan broke up that I was making the exact opposite kind of music on my own. I think that anytime someone has a voice that they can't express, they find some sort of avenue. Papa M was always my avenue for that.

So is music what you'll be doing forever?

I know that it will be. There's not much else I'm good at.

Music is obviously how you make your living now. How long has it been?

Since about 1994—about 10 years now.

What was your last job?

I was a parking lot attendant. I loved it actually, you just read and hang out.

But it wasn't music.

Yeah, I started to think, "Oh fuck, this is it. This is how I'm going to die, in this booth."

Five dollars, please.

Exactly. And you don't even exist as a human actually, which was fine with me because I'm not really a social person. [laughs]

That was after Slint?

A couple years after. It just dawned on me that it wasn't doing me any good. I wasn't even making enough off that job to survive. I was living off of a record I had done a couple years ago. I was living off of Slint money. I was like, "Why am I working these shitty jobs when obviously the thing I love to do is what I get paid the most for? Maybe I should just quit and do it." So I started touring with as many people as I could like Will [Oldham] and then Tortoise. It just kind of took over I guess.

So essentially you made yourself available to friends.

Yeah, it was never a career decision really. It was more like friends needed somebody to play with—Tortoise just needed a bass player and the same thing happened with Stereolab. It seems like that's the way it has always worked. You help out your friends and they help you out. It's cool.

So your parking-garage days—that was when people were picking up on Slint and royalties were coming in?

Yeah. It's weird because, for the first year and a half or so, sales [of *Spiderland*] were kind of slow. Then it sort of picked up. I keep waiting for it to taper off to where its like, "OK, it's reached this audience," but it doesn't. It seems like there's always somebody else discovering that record. It's really cool. It's just one of those things where it was just the right time for a group of people; we were all in a similar state of mind at the time.

How old were you guys then?

Around *Spiderland*? I was—gosh—I was like 21 and I was the oldest. We were all *really* young. When the band started we were still teenagers. We were a three-piece at the time. There were just bad punk bands around at the time, and we were like, "OK we're going to make a band that's totally different. Everyone's trying to rock out constantly, we're not going to rock out, let's do something totally different that people haven't heard before." We had these weird riffs; these weird songs.

Was there an element—like you were saying about doing the Papa M stuff during your time with Zwan—where you all were writing or recording music that you weren't hearing elsewhere?

Yeah. It's kind of an immature way of doing it, I think, but a lot of it is reactionary. A lot of the music I make is reacting to whatever the current climate is. If the climate is pop music, then I'm going to make some traditional hymns. If the climate is post-rock instrumental music, then I'll make lyric-oriented songs. It's weird how much frustration breeds music.

I listened to Slint's *Spiderland* the other day—it had been years. It really holds up. But what I listen to has changed a good deal since I first heard that record. But it seems like your music has changed with me; your new stuff is as totally relevant to me today as Slint was to me 10 years ago. A lot of bands I was listening to back then I return to from time-to-time only for nostalgia's sake. But you, I have never had to put down. Does that make sense?

I think it totally makes sense. It seems like my favorite musicians—even if there were patches of their career that I wasn't into—I always liked what they were doing and was

interested in the same things they were interested in. I've always liked the Mekons and all the turns and twists they've taken. The Fall and Bob Dylan, too.

If you're not changing . . .

. . . there's something wrong. The Mekons are a good example of that. Every record is different, but it's always the Mekons. ¶ In the early '90s, me and Will Oldham would follow the Mekons around the country like they were the Grateful Dead. We'd just get in a car—a little group of us—and follow them on tour, all the way down to New Orleans.

Did you get to know them at all?

No, we didn't get to know them at all. [laughs]

That's awesome.

I would stand in the same spot every single night, like this total geek fan.

Where did you stand?

I would always stand between Tom Greenhalgh and John Langford.

Surely you have come to know them since, after spending so much time in Chicago.

Yeah. And Will's become friends with Sally.

Have you ever told them about this?

I never told them because I thought it might freak them out. [laughs] We used to be super-fans. Especially in that time period, we were *so* excited about it all. They actually had that vibe that I would like to have. Their words just have this non-hippie celebratory vibe.

That's a really good way of putting it. How do you describe your music?

I feel like I'm trying to make modern spiritual music for myself that I can listen to when I go to sleep. But I think there is a lot of power in music. I always have to be careful about what I sing, so I try to make it things that are kind of positive. Not too dark.

What do you mean when you say you have to be careful?

I think you live what you sing about, so I try not to obsess too much on the darker side.

So you try to limit the dark side?

Yeah, the diet version: Papa M light! [laughs] ©

I think you live what you sing about, so I try not to obsess too much on the darker side.

pink bloque

“We sometimes joke that more people can pick out J-Lo in a lineup than Dick Cheney,” remarks Dara Greenwald, member of the Chicago-based activist dance troupe Pink Bloque. In 2002, Greenwald and her friends decided to draw on public fascination with pop culture and give protests an extreme makeover. The result? Pink Bloque, a collective of radical feminists who sport pink outfits and dance to popular songs in actions coordinated to educate people about topics ranging from gender wage inequity to the Patriot Act. Pink Bloque engages their brand of creative resistance at protests and in “unsanctioned” locations, as when they danced outside hip bars in Chicago’s Wicker Park neighborhood one weekend and showered patrons with fliers about date rape.

This year, Pink Bloque joined thousands of people in Chicago protesting the one-year anniversary of the war on Iraq, rocking to Outkast’s hit “Hey Ya.” Their next action saw them storm the nation’s capital on April 25 during the March for Women’s Lives, where they helped inspire other marchers to experience the “unifying force of the radical booty shake.”

I spoke with Jane Ball, Kate Dougherty and Dara Greenwald of Pink Bloque about their brightly-colored dance, dance revolution.

Interview by **Emily Udell**

How would you respond to someone who said that your methods undermine the seriousness of the messages that you’re trying to convey?

Jane Ball: What we’re doing is a tactic and we’re using the things we use—the pink, the pop culture—to engage people and make them interested. It’s more effective for us to use this tactic and say, “Hey, what do you think about the Patriot Act?” and “It’s getting hot in here for immigrants,” than throwing it in people’s faces and yelling or looking really scary.

Kate Dougherty: People assume that when you’re doing something serious, you’re also boring and/or aggressive. I wanted a way that I could engage people about serious things but at the same time not make them boring or, like, “I’m going to give you this manifesto of what I believe and you’re going to listen to it.” I’m much more interested in dialoging with people. ¶ We dance in different places because the police, the city, and the government control where you see protests. By us showing up in places not only where we’re not expected, but not sanctioned technically to be, we turn public space back into space for dialogue, not just for shopping.

Dara Greenwald: We are very serious about

social change. We do this in our free time. We spend a lot of time meeting, organizing, coordinating, dancing, getting sound systems, making sure that we represent both on our own in the street and also in conjunction with other social movements on the street.

You’ve danced to songs by Donna Summer, Nelly, and Justin Timberlake. How can pop culture—which often seems very vapid and apolitical—lead back to politics?

Greenwald: We’re trying to re-associate messages with popular songs. Music tends to appeal to emotion and nostalgia and people really connect experiences to songs. There we were at the Taste of Chicago on the Fourth of July last year, talking about the Patriot Act and dancing to “It’s Getting Hot in Herre” by Nelly, which was a really popular song then. We thought maybe we could start making new associations so that when people hear “It’s Getting Hot in Herre” again—and they’re *going* to hear it again—they might think, “Last time I heard this song, these girls were dancing at the Taste of Chicago and I got this flier about how it’s getting hot in here for people who are detained at Guantanamo, or it’s getting hot in here for our civil liberties.”



Dougherty: People are more likely to walk over and wonder what's going on if we're dancing to Nelly rather than "Give Peace a Chance" or something like that.

Do you think that people really get it? I mean people pay attention to you—you're cute, you're dressed in pink, you're dancing to popular songs—but do they really stick around mentally for the message?

Ball: It depends on what we're doing. It's definitely more effective if we have a banner and we have fliers. We did a tour last summer for a week and a half about the Patriot Act. We did workshops and dancing. People that were at the workshops definitely got the message. I think when they see a banner and hear the music and read the fliers, they're going to get the message. We also use words that are really easy to understand and language that is really approachable and understandable.

In the documentary *The Weather Underground*, Kathleen Cleaver, who was the communications secretary for the Black Panther party, talks about how, when the big radical movement that happened in opposition to the Vietnam War started to die in the '70s, part of the problem was that the left lost its sense of humor. What role do you see fun and humor

playing in the progressive movement?

Dougherty: I think it's vital. I don't think I would be nearly [as] engaged in politics unless I found some fun and humor in it. In some ways it's about getting pleasure from doing activist work. I think that's one of the reasons that have kept Pink Bloque together as a group.

Greenwald: Humor opens people up on some level to messages because they're more relaxed. Also, what we do a lot of the time borders on the illegal. We are often frightened when we are out there on the street, whether it's at a sanctioned or unsanctioned protest. The way the police operate in this town is through intimidating garb and tactics, and they have a military strategy to control people. It's horrible and scary and repressive. Within that, we have to find spaces for freedom and joy.

I noticed at a couple protests Pink Bloque wearing patches that read "2 Cute 2 Be Arrested" and I thought, "that's brilliant." You're coming out and saying it—you're saying what it is that's so tense about those demonstrations: the fact that people could get arrested, could come into conflict with police.

Ball: If you look on our website and you look at photographs of us dancing, there's

always cops behind us in every picture and they're laughing. I don't know if they're smiling and laughing because they're thinking, "those girls are definitely *not* cute enough," or "they really can't dance," but it brings their level down. They're not as tense, they know we're not going to try to hurt them.

Dougherty: I remember at TABD [Transatlantic Business Dialogue] we were walking along the street and one of the commanders looked at us and said, "Too cute to be arrested. *Heh, heh, heh!*" He just laughed at us! I think it's good for breaking the tension because it's on everyone's mind, when you have four helicopters over your head and are surrounded by snipers. One false move and god knows what could happen to you.

So what you're doing is innovative, but it's also part of a long tradition of injecting politics and activism with humor and spectacle. I'm thinking of Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies as a well-known example that drew a lot of attention during the late '60s. How do you see yourself fitting in to this history of activism?

Greenwald: Creative resistance has been going on ever since there's been resistance to have. The Suffragettes did pageants in



We are committed to challenging the white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal empire one street dance party at a time.

the street and spectacles; Bread and Puppet Theater have been part of protests for a long time. At workshops, we like to talk about ACT UP [AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power] specifically because they were very active in the movement to get healthcare for people with AIDS, to talk about safer sex, to talk about sexual freedom, and made these very slick posters and signs and billboards that had the look of corporate advertising.

What do you think of the cooptation of radical young feminism into mainstream culture—like how Riot Girl groups like Bikini Kill got pressed through the mainstream culture mill and came out as the Spice Girls?

Greenwald: I think that one of the failures of feminism was its insistence on individualism, individual oppression, and identity. Any identity-based movement that does not critique capitalism is easily co-opted by capitalism. The problem is just talking about women and not talking about the structure of our social relations and capitalism. It is just easily co-opted and sold back to us.

Ball: I have mixed feelings about it. To me, any kind of messaging that makes girls feel stronger or makes them feel independent is really important. But I don't think that the Spice Girls or Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera are really effective because they're also selling a body image. It's not like, "You can be anything, you can do anything," it's really that, "You can be anything or do anything if you look like me and be as thin

as I am, and be as cute as I am, and have blond hair like me, and be as rich as I am."

Some people argue that young feminists today are putting feminist issues on the backburner to address other issues like sweatshops, globalization, or the environment. Do you think that's true?

Ball: How are those not feminist issues? How are those not the issues of a feminist?

Dougherty: All oppressions are intertwined. You can't talk about gender oppression without talking about racial oppression without talking about class oppression. All those things are so wrapped up in one another that teasing out what is what is impossible.

How does the young feminist movement today fit into a larger progressive movement?

Greenwald: I don't know if there is actually a feminist movement right now. There are feminists in academics, there are feminists in corporations, there are feminists everywhere, but I don't know if it's still a movement. When Bikini Kill came out there was actually a Riot Girl movement—there were people all over this country having Riot Girl meetings. That was part of what was so amazing about Bikini Kill: They actually connected to a movement. The Spice Girls are not connected to a grassroots movement.

Dougherty: I wish more people would get involved with the progressive movement and realize that they don't need to be a non-profit and they don't need to have

funding. We did it without any of that stuff. And that's one thing that I think is really important. I think there's this whole set-up that makes people think you have to be in a non-profit to do activism. I think that's been set up by our predecessors. Obviously they paved the way for us, and there are a lot of non-profits doing a lot of great work, but I think it's important to get away from that formula for social change to happen because it's being professionalized.

So what is your long-term political strategy?

Ball: To not get arrested.

Dougherty: I don't know if we have a long-term goal. I know we're planning on doing something in August—I think that's about as far out as we plan. We have been around for two years. We've had a full change in membership and we're probably going to do another full change in membership again, which is really sad because we're losing a lot of really awesome people. But I think it's one of those things that we're going to have to evaluate year after year.

Ball: We change with pop culture. But I don't know if we have a long-term strategy beyond August. We can't see any further than that, we're living right now!

Dougherty: It's not like we're going to self-destruct after August.

Greenwald: We are committed to challenging the white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal empire one street dance party at a time. ©



hairstyles of the damned

a novel by joe meno

ALL THE POWER

REVOLUTION
WITHOUT
ILLUSION

MARK ANDERSEN

An ambitious, accessible mix of history, autobiography, and how-to-manual, this "anti-manifesto" challenges popular concepts of radical activism. Long-time inner-city organizer and punk rabble-rouser Mark Andersen takes aim at the illusions that tend to keep North American radicals self-satisfied but ineffective. A whirlwind tour across decades—through punk and student activism, identity and lifestyle politics, animal rights, armed struggle, patriotism, globalization, and beyond—this book seeks a radicalism that is both rigorously self-critical and genuinely populist. Leaping from agrarian socialist experiments of the early twentieth century to embattled 1960s streets to the fiercely independent punk underground of the 1980s and 1990s to the present-day global-justice movement, *All the Power* suggests how the seemingly most idealistic of enterprises—revolution—might be practically accomplished.

COMING IN SEPTEMBER ON PUNK PLANET BOOKS WWW.PUNKPLANETBOOKS.COM

Since their inception, The Promise, one of the East Coast's most provocative crews of hardcore buccaneers, has learned a thing or two about dedication. On one hand, these straightedge veterans have managed to live up to their name: They made a promise and, come hell or high water, they're sticking to it. On the other hand, they've worked for everything they've got: Hours upon hours have been spent in the garage, in the studio and, most importantly, on the road—The Promise has delivered its raucous, unfiltered hardcore to fans in as many venues as they could reach.

Last summer, tour-hungry as ever, the Promise headed out for a full-scale assault in support of its Indecision Records full-length, *Believer*. The fellas were having the time of their lives when, in a matter of moments, disaster struck and it seemed like it all fell apart. Over the last year they've had to do a lot of rebuilding, but they stuck to their guns and they're stronger than ever.

Just as The Promise gears up in preparation for its next lengthy exodus across the US, bassist Jonathan Buske and vocalist Anderson Bradshaw took some time to reminisce about one fateful early morning last summer that could have possibly ended all of their lives and nearly lead to the denouement of the outfit. In the end, this trial by fire helped to usher in an even more fervent era of pick-sliding and finger-pointing, even as the sand makes it's way through the throat of the hourglass.

Interview by **Brian Peterson**

Photos by **John McKaig**

There have been a lot of rumors about what happened on your last summer tour. So what did happen?

Jonathan Buske: Well, we had a bit of a tragedy while on tour with Bane, The Suicide File, and Comeback Kid. We were renting a van from a friend of ours. Anyone in a band who rents a van knows that it's ridiculously expensive. We thought we were lucky; we were all grateful that this dude was going to rent us his van for a lot less than it would cost to rent from a company, which meant we'd have a really good chance to make ends meet while on tour. ¶ So we head out on tour and everything's good, except the air conditioning isn't working. We tough it out and decided

that, unless it gets unbearable, we'll just deal. Aside from that, we didn't really have the time to get it taken care of—the tour was booked pretty solid. It wasn't that bad until we got to the West Coast and then it started to really get hot. Because of that, we were doing all our drives at night after our shows because the van was like an oven during the day. ¶ When we played Los Angeles, we stayed with our good friend Dave Mandel. We had a day off, so we took the van in just to have it looked at to make sure it was running properly. It had begun to make this whistling noise, so we took it in just to have that looked at. There's a garage down the street from Mandel's house. We took our van there on the previous tour for a check-up, so we did just the same with this van. Apparently, there was a gear that needed to be replaced because a part of the axel was broken and was leaking oil. We gave the go-ahead to have it worked on, paid and then left that afternoon for San Diego. ¶ After playing a fest in San Diego, we took off after the show that night for Arizona. About an hour into the drive our roadie, Charlie, noticed that between second and third gear the van was slipping. Nothing major, but it was kind of like a skip or a jar to the vehicle. Being 2:30 a.m., there really wasn't anything that could have been done about it right there and then. We figured we would get to Arizona, play the show, and then on the next day we'd bring the van in to have it checked out again. But we never made it to Arizona in that van. ¶ It was about 3:30 a.m. when we pulled the van over due to it stalling on Interstate 8 about 90 miles outside of San Diego. While everyone slept, Charlie pulled to the side. I was in the passenger seat in a really deep sleep. As we crossed the rumble strips, I woke up halfway, but I never actually opened my eyes. As the van started to slow down, it filled with this thick black smoke. The smell immediately yanked me out of sleep completely—it shocked the hell out of me! I was listening to my iPod, and in a frenzy I threw it on the ground and yelled to everyone else in the back, who were all sleeping, to get the fuck out. Some of the guys were without shoes, some without shirts; none of us were wearing what you'd consider the proper attire for being stranded in a desert! Not knowing exactly what was going on, but assuming it was merely overheating,

we jumped out not thinking to grab anything only to be greeted with flames bellowing from the wheel wells, the grill and the hood by the windshield! The flames weren't visible from inside the van because the smoke was so thick you could barely open your eyes. Even if you could, you could barely see your hand in front of your face. So when we had jumped out of the car, we didn't think to grab anything. In hindsight, had we known what was going on, we would have immediately started emptying the van when we were jumping out. Once we were out and saw the huge flames, we checked to make sure we had all made it out, and that we were all OK. Then Charlie told us there was a full tank of gas in the van, and we didn't know if something was going to blow up or what, but we knew it wasn't going to burn out anytime soon. We didn't know what to save—or how—so we decided it might be better to just try and grab the money and hope for the best. We thought we could call the fire department and they'd put it out before the fire reached the equipment and merchandise that was on the roof in clam shells and in the far back of the van. ¶ I try to imagine how I could have acted faster or made better decisions in those first few moments. It's easy to say "You should have done this, you should have done that," but when all of a sudden you wake from a dead sleep to 10-foot flames devouring the front of a van in which the gas tank is 100 percent full, the first thing that comes to mind is that any moment you could be blown away by a Hollywood explosion. The last thing you care about is your fucking shoes and jacket, trust me! Under that pretense, we accepted defeat and walked away from the van, called 9-1-1, reported the situation, and just kind of hung out watching our entire career as a band get burnt to ash and rubble.

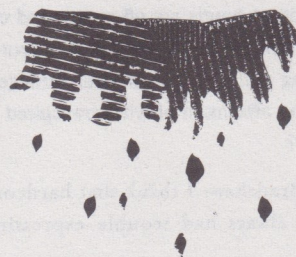
I can't even imagine the horror that must have washed over you. How did you go on from there?

Jonathan: We finished the tour so, ultimately, we didn't throw up our hands altogether. Charlie's brave or stupid soul, depending on how you look at it, saved us. When we first got out of the van, he grabbed what he thought was the money envelope. But as we were checking to make sure we had everybody, he looked down at his hand and realized he had picked up a

THE PROMISE



**"I WOKE UP HALFWAY, BUT I NEVER ACTUALLY OPENED MY EYES.
AS THE VAN STARTED TO SLOW DOWN, IT FILLED WITH THIS
THICK BLACK SMOKE."**



CD case. He fucking ran back *into* the van that was on fire—and, I thought, about to blow sky-high—so he could grab the cash. ¶ We called the fire department, but by the time they arrived all of our clothes, equipment, merch, computers, iPods, phones—everything we had—was gone. We had nothing but time to try to call people and figure out what to do next. ¶ After the van was extinguished, the state police drove us to a hotel where we then called Mandel. He pretty much understood that we were very frustrated and that we wanted to go home. He offered us anything and everything we wanted or needed and told us to let him know when we had a definitive answer. We sat down together and discussed what we wanted to do. The situation seemed grim.

What was running through your head at the time?

Jonathan: With all we had lost and with our monetary status, we were just going to go home and let the band die. It was an enormous blow to the band and to our personal lives, seeing as a lot of us had pretty much our entire lives inside that van that night. To try and rebuild all we lost seemed kind of futile at that point. That night, Bane called and offered us, literally, the shirts off their backs if we would consider continuing on the tour. They offered us their van, their trailer, equipment, clothing, food, money and—most importantly—their friendship. Anything we needed or wanted they said they would do their best to provide us with it. They knew what we were thinking about the outcome of the disaster and they didn't want to see that happen to us. Bane did everything imaginable to save our band. That morning they arrived at our hotel with six huge boxes of merch that Mandel drove an hour and a half out of his way at 4:00 a.m. to drop off to them for us, as well as care packages with clothing, shoes, deodorant, shaving cream, razors, toothpaste and brushes from Atticus Clothing and Macbeth Shoes. It was definitely an amazing thing to have at that time.

So how did you approach the tour from then on out?

Jonathan: The rest of the tour we borrowed equipment from Bane and Comeback Kid and we stuffed ourselves into Bane's van.

Luckily, they had just modified their van with two lofts, so there were three of us to each of the three benches, one person in each loft and the driver and passenger for two weeks! At all the shows following the fire, there was nothing but help and support from people who had heard of what happened. There were numerous donations: cash, checks, clothing, food and gift cards, right down to musical equipment. Had it not been for the generosity of all the people involved in keeping us on our feet, I'm sure we would have given up completely and gone home with our tails between our legs.

How did this affect your outlook in terms of day-to-day life?

Jonathan: It really served as a means to put things in perspective. We were all fortunate enough to get out of the situation before it amassed to something even more horrific, but unfortunately there are times when people aren't that lucky.

This has to have also impacted the tenor of your upcoming material, right?

Jonathan: Well, upon returning home from the tour, we actually had a member change. We parted ways with our guitarist JD, who wrote a lot of the music for the band. Things just weren't clicking anymore with him and us and we felt that it might be best to part ways. So now we have Mike Scoville who was also in One King Down with Derrick, our drummer. I think that with the combination of Mike and Derrick, with their musical history together, along with us now being able to write songs as a whole band, the band is going to be a lot stronger and a lot more directed. We've only had time to work together on a few occasions due to acquiring new equipment, but we've managed to write two new songs in that time that are still right up our alley. We're all really excited about the member change and we think it's going to be the best option we've ever taken, for sure.

Modern hardcore bands are often accused of not writing from the heart. Do you find yourselves playing and writing with even stronger feelings in the aftermath of what transpired last summer?

Anderson Bradshaw: I think that hardcore bands have always had trouble expressing

emotion in a sincere way. One band will get a little recognition and immediately there will be 10 others with the exact same agenda. Everyone's co-opting what someone else said which sucks for everyone involved. Some people are really concerned with being "successful." Granted, it's nice to have dreams of being able to make a living from doing something you love, however if the price is lying to yourself and to others then, for me at least, the end does not justify the means.

How have you guys tried to stick to coming from the gut?

Jonathan: It's not a matter of trying for us, we just do what we do and say what we say. There's never been any kind of masking or ulterior motive behind doing this band. Even after we had the carpet violently ripped from under our feet and we were laid out flat on our backs, the last thing we were willing to do was kill the band. If anything, it gave us that much more incentive to do the band because it gave us that much more fuel to feed the fire!

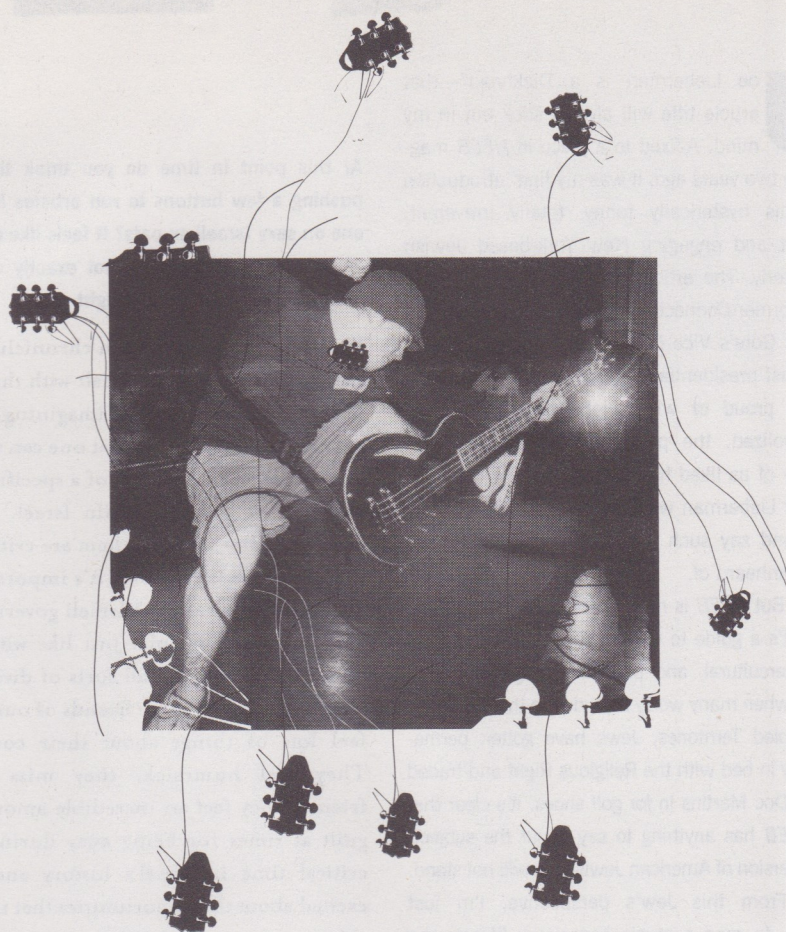
That said, it seems the "tough-guy" attitude is making a comeback in some circles. Do you think there is a particular reason violence continues to plague a scene that you love so dearly?

Anderson: Life isn't perfect. People aren't perfect. Hardcore is not a fantasy and it shouldn't be perceived as one. Violence is an unfortunate reality in our world. The hardcore scene will never become the utopia that we all wish it would. If a person's only worry is that a fight broke out at a show because some kid was psyched about his kung-fu dance routine, then that person should consider him or herself lucky. Flip on the news: In this country, violence is not making a comeback— it has always maintained a steady all-time high! That doesn't mean we shouldn't try to do better. That doesn't mean we give up. We're all capable of doing more and being better people. I'd like to think the reason this scene separates itself from your typical concert crowd is because the kids want more than just empty lyrics with dance parts. But you're dealing with young people—they're angry, pissed off, and most of the time they're misdirected. That's where fights come in to play. It's an ongoing problem. You just have to be

prepared to take care of what's yours. Set a good example, set the standard, tell kids that they're fucking up and that someone could get hurt.

Hardcore is obviously something that has touched you for a long time. How has your relationship with the scene changed since your "salad days," especially now after going through such a close call on tour?

Anderson: It's different, of course. You go from seeing bands and older kids as larger-than-life people, to them becoming your dearest friends. I try to stay away from all the "back in the day" mantras you hear from people who've been around and have become bitter know-it-alls, like "Things are not what they used to be!" No shit, genius, things change. Why would hardcore be any different? Why would you want it any other way? The scene isn't what it was, but neither are the people who were involved. Change doesn't fall into a good/bad category, it's *reality*. I see a lot of mockery and elitism towards new kids, which is ridiculous. It's as if some of the dudes that know everything about hardcore, know everything about everything. I'm pretty sure we could find a million subjects that they don't know shit about. I don't know what people get out of thinking that everyone around them is an idiot. I think that would feel terrible, shitty, and lonely. "Man, I don't know any of these kids!" Well, that's your fault! Granted it can be a little disheartening to come to realize that all your friendships have faded, but take the time to talk to someone new. Jesus, just stop the fucking whining—sorry, was that a little caustic? That kind of thinking is so common, and it gets under my skin. ¶ We get into hardcore because we hear it and it kicks our ass. Then we get older and we get bored and so we start to ruin it? It's a really bad idea to get too big for your britches. This is hardcore, it is supposed to be for the outsiders, so there should be no place for that kind of thing. If that's the case, then fuck that. It's not the new kids that ruin a scene, it's the old guys who walk around like they're hot shit. That judgmental attitude doesn't get you anywhere. ©



"EVEN AFTER WE HAD THE CARPET VIOLENTLY RIPPED FROM UNDER OUR FEET AND WE WERE LAID OUT FLAT ON OUR BACKS, THE LAST THING WE WERE WILLING TO DO WAS KILL THE BAND."



Joe Lieberman is a Dickhead"—that article title will always stick out in my mind. Affixed to a piece in *HEEB* magazine two years ago, it was my first introduction to this hysterically funny, totally irreverent, smart and engaging New York-based Jewish quarterly. The article came out not long after the former Connecticut Democratic Senator ran as Al Gore's Vice Presidential running mate in the last presidential election. While many Jews were proud of what Lieberman's candidacy symbolized, the problem was that not that many of us liked him. It seemed like everyone knew Lieberman was a dickhead, but to come out and say such a thing the way *HEEB* did was unheard of.

But *HEEB* is more than just a two-year-old dis. It's a guide to what it means to be Jewish, countercultural, and politically progressive at a time when many worry that, due to the war in the Occupied Territories, Jews have gotten permanently in bed with the Religious Right and traded their Doc Martins in for golf shoes. It's clear that if *HEEB* has anything to say about the subject, this version of American Jewish life will not stand.

From this Jew's perspective, I'm just happy to read a music conscious, literate rag that does not limit the Jewish musical imagination to ethno-religious free jazz and klezmer. "That was never part of my experience," says new *HEEB* editor Josh Neuman. "Mine was punk rock and hardcore."

Interview by **Joel Schalit**

At this point in time do you think that it's pushing a few buttons to run articles like the one on sexy Israeli ex-pats? It feels like outside of New York, Israelis are not exactly considered hip, welcome people right now.

Well, we were interested in chronicling the way these young people dealt with the kind of tensions that you're imagining. Our general take on Israel is that one can still be pro-Israel and be critical of a specific government or policies within Israel. These young people—many of them are critical of those policies themselves. It's important to distinguish between the Israeli government and the Israeli people. Just like with our democracy, there are all sorts of divergent viewpoints. These were friends of ours who feel lots of things about their country: They feel homesick, they miss their friends, they feel an incredible amount of guilt at times for being away during this critical time in Israel's history and also excited about the opportunities that they're able to experience here in America. But believe me, *HEEB*'s become a lightning rod in the Jewish community. People who pick up our magazine seem to have really powerful responses.

How do you see yourselves being a "lightning rod" in the Jewish community?

There isn't much out there for young people in terms of Jewish publications. We're not shy about our aesthetic, about our iconography, about our ideas about being young people in America in the year 2004. For instance last month, we were declared blasphemous by the Anti-Defamation League—they didn't like our passion play pictorial. Abraham Foxman [director of the ADL] decided to declare us offensive and blasphemous. I think he saw it as an opportunity to deflect some of the criticism that had been aimed at his organization for being so outspoken against Mel Gibson's latest movie, even though the guy tended to mute his criticism the more Evangelical Christians got behind the film. ¶ We've been getting playa-hating from the Jewish community since day one. At best, the Jewish community sees what we've been



able to do and likes the results—how we've been able to mobilize people within the community, people who normally wouldn't be active, to be a part of our fledgling Jewish community. But in part, we've been a real lightning rod.

Do you think that *HEEB* represents the lingering left-wing Jewish community in the US?

Yeah, absolutely. That's the idea: We're Groucho Marxists.

How would you see yourself in relation to other progressive American Jewish magazines like *Tikkun*?

There would be a lot of policies that we would agree with. I think the major differences would be aesthetic in the tone of our magazines—we're from a different generation. But there's room enough in the Jewish publishing world for *Tikkun* and *HEEB* to exist side by side. *HEEB* is for a younger generation. ¶ Its great to be talking to someone from *Punk Planet* because just as "punk" was originally a term of shame and became the symbol and label for a genera-

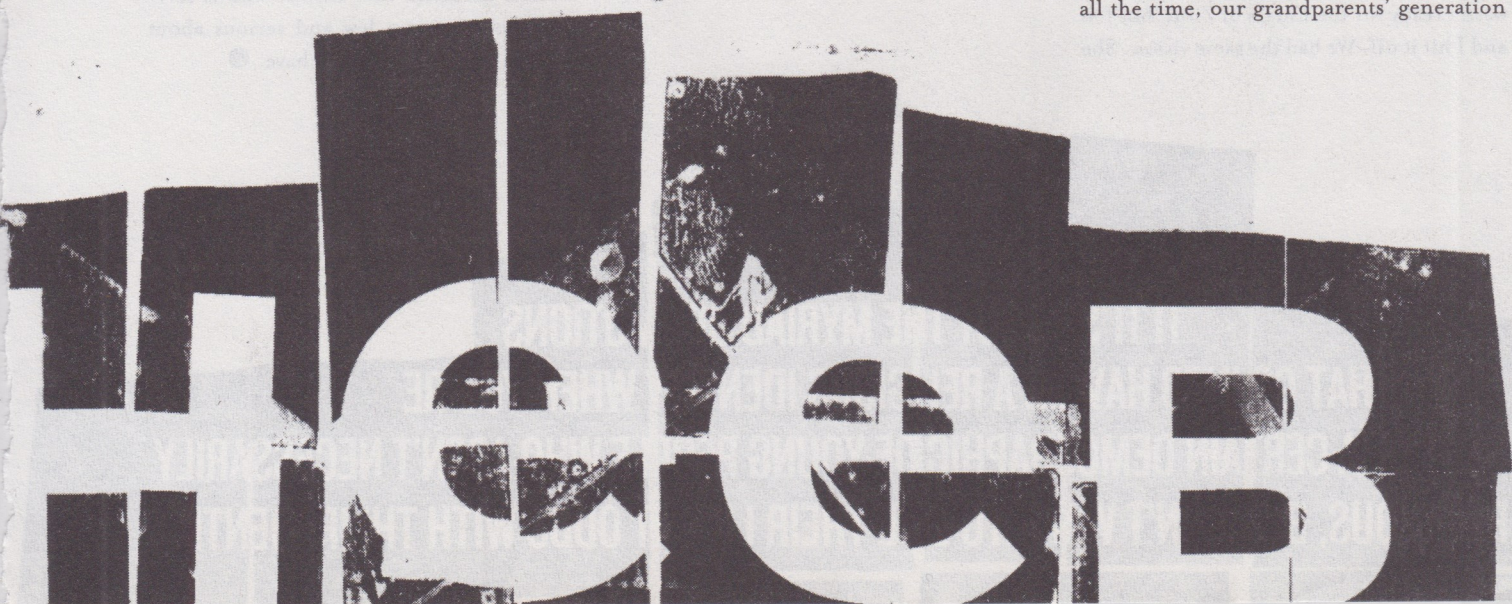
tion, that's what's happening with the word "heeb" right now. It's a generation that considers itself unabashedly Jewish but not in this traditional religious way. More of a cultural expression I'd say.

That very much appeals to me because I have no specific interest or allegiance to the religious side of Judaism; cultural Judaism tends to be far richer and much more politically expressive to me.

Totally. We call ourselves the bastard lovechild of Lenny Bruce and Emma Goldman. We're an irreverent magazine, but beneath the irreverence is a serious kind of political agenda. Our politics aren't overt but they're there and people understand that we have a real specific attitude and point of view towards the universe. We don't feel that the message and the media can be disconnected. That's something that reminds me of the punk ethic as well, especially the kinds of connections that have always existed between punk, anarchy, and surrealism. When it's good—when it's really vibrant and powerful—it's not simply broken down to a simple political message. I think we're interested in exploring the contradictions and ambiguities and tensions of people who are just as serious about living their lives as they are living their lives as Jews.

Have you had much of a response to *HEEB* outside of the US—like in Israel for example?

More and more. We actually have a huge following in Berlin. It's no joke—they gobble us up. I moonlight as a philosophy professor at NYU and I've taught courses on post-holocaust theology. I've been very interested in Germany's confrontation with the Holocaust and the extent to which that culture has embraced us really reaffirms that relationship. They brought us over for a Jewish cultural festival they have every November. They flew us all over there and we had this giant electro party in this church. Six-hundred people showed up! We've got hundreds and hundreds of subscribers, and we've been covered by all the major media there. ¶ In Israel, we're getting tons and tons of coverage these days too. We had a huge writeup in *Ha'aretz*, the left-leaning newspaper. This magazine *Extra Large*—a really interesting Jewish anarchist magazine—just did a big spread on us. *HEEB* is selling really well, especially this last issue, and we're still pretty young. What the magazine is showing is that people want to celebrate—not just *celebrate* because 'celebrate' is such a tribalistic and nationalist word, more like explore the ambiguities and the contradictions of Jewish selfhood without all of the pieties and self righteousness associated with the bourgeois Jewish experience, you know? A lot of us grew up in this Todd Solondz kind of world—this miserable suburban bourgeois rendition of what Jewish life was. While our parents' generation doesn't really get the magazine all the time, our grandparents' generation



sometimes does. I think that's because our parents' generation was part of this uncomfortable hiccup in Jewish history where people were leaving the city—white flight, businesses were moving to suburbia, people were changing their last names and getting into those country clubs that used to not have them as members, filing down their nose—and a lot of our unabashed Jewish insistence on having a vital, multi-faceted Jewish identity really puts them off. They're sometimes embarrassed by what they see in the magazine, whereas our grandparents' generation understand it. Like the old Jewish New York—the New York of the Lower East Side, of the Yiddish *Forward* and left wing muckracking—this is the sort of thing we're harkening back to; these are the traditions we're tapping into. There's a way in which I feel like we're doing something new, but it also falls into a larger cultural context. ¶ I grew up in suburban New Jersey. I always felt extremely alienated by the Jewish life that I was thrust into. Like a lot of young people I turned to punk rock, listening to hardcore and playing in bands. In 1995 I came across this zine called *Mazel Tov Cocktail*, about Jews and punk. I carried it around like a bible for four or five years until I met the woman that wrote it, Jen Bleyer, the founder of *HEEB*. That's kinda how we met. I was the original music editor. At the time I was trying to get this Jewish hardcore band together called the Elders of Zion. The world wasn't ready for the Elders of Zion, but Jen and I hit it off. We had the same vision. She

was getting a lot of resumes from people who were like "Yeah, I'd love to be your music editor, I love klezmer." That was never part of my experience. Mine was punk rock and hardcore. We talked for a while and took it from there.

Looking at the cover of the current issue, I see Sleater-Kinney's Carrie Brownstein, the photographer Glen E Friedman, Le Tigre's JD Samson . . . A lot of fans of these artists probably don't know that these people are Jewish until you put them on the cover of your magazine. What's the purpose in identifying them as such?

They have to have something important to say to our readership. Keep in mind that on the same cover is Cornel West. This is not just a Jewish pride thing. That's what the sports piece in that issue is about: Here's a piece that's exploring this bizarre and zany culture of middle aged men obsessed with Jews in sports. What comes across in it is this larger question as to what Jewish pride means. Is it simply that we're proud that someone who shares our background—however remote that person's connection is—succeeds in this very conventional way in American society?

It's an important question to ask from any community's perspective.

I get tons of fan-mail saying "Thanks a lot, you make me proud to be Jewish." That's fine, but that's not the purpose of the magazine. I mean yes, it is *part* of it—the message isn't Jewish *shame* either—but it's about the myriad of emotions that go into having a religious identity when you're part of a certain demographic of young people who aren't necessarily religious, but don't want to live their life at odds with their identity. I'm not one of these people who likes to go around listing how many punk rockers were Jews—"Oh, I'm so proud that the Ramones were Jewish, this person from the Clash that person from NOFX." ¶ There was this moment as a young person that's always resonated with me: The drama of that moment in "Bonzo goes to Bitburg" when Joey Ramone says, "As I watched it on TV somehow it really bothered me." He was watching Ronald Reagan lay a wreath at the graves of SS officers in Bitburg. It was such an opportunity to make a self-righteous, sanctimonious lunge at this incredibly vulnerable target. But what Joey emphasized at that moment was his confusion, his struggle with himself to make sense of what he was watching on TV. It is those sort of moments that we're interested in exploring. Those are confusing and profoundly human moments that anyone who is serious about being a Jew and serious about being a human is going to have. ©

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One Year of Punk Planet: Statistics*

number of issues: 6

number of pages: 1008

number of interviews: 51

number of records reviewed: 2,500

cost on newsstand: \$29.70

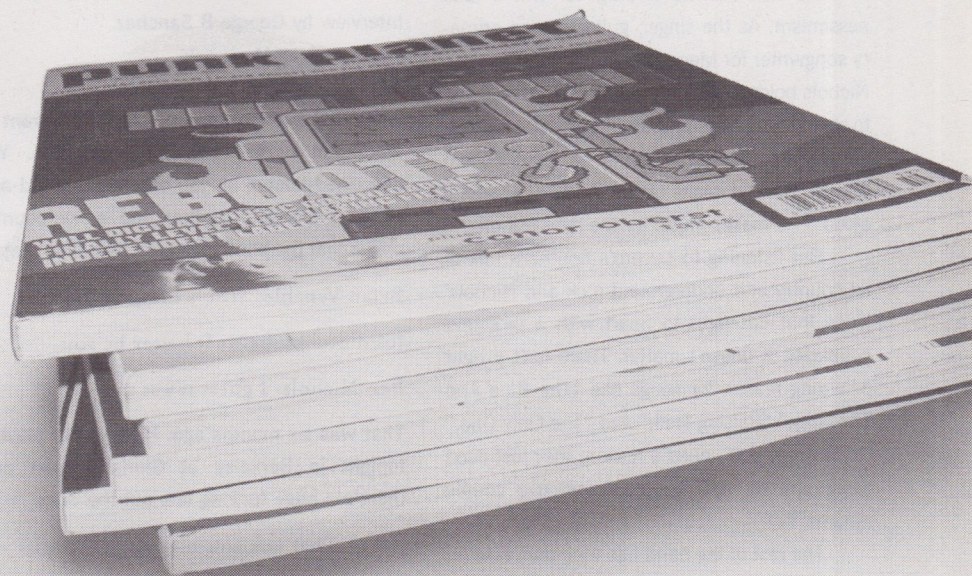
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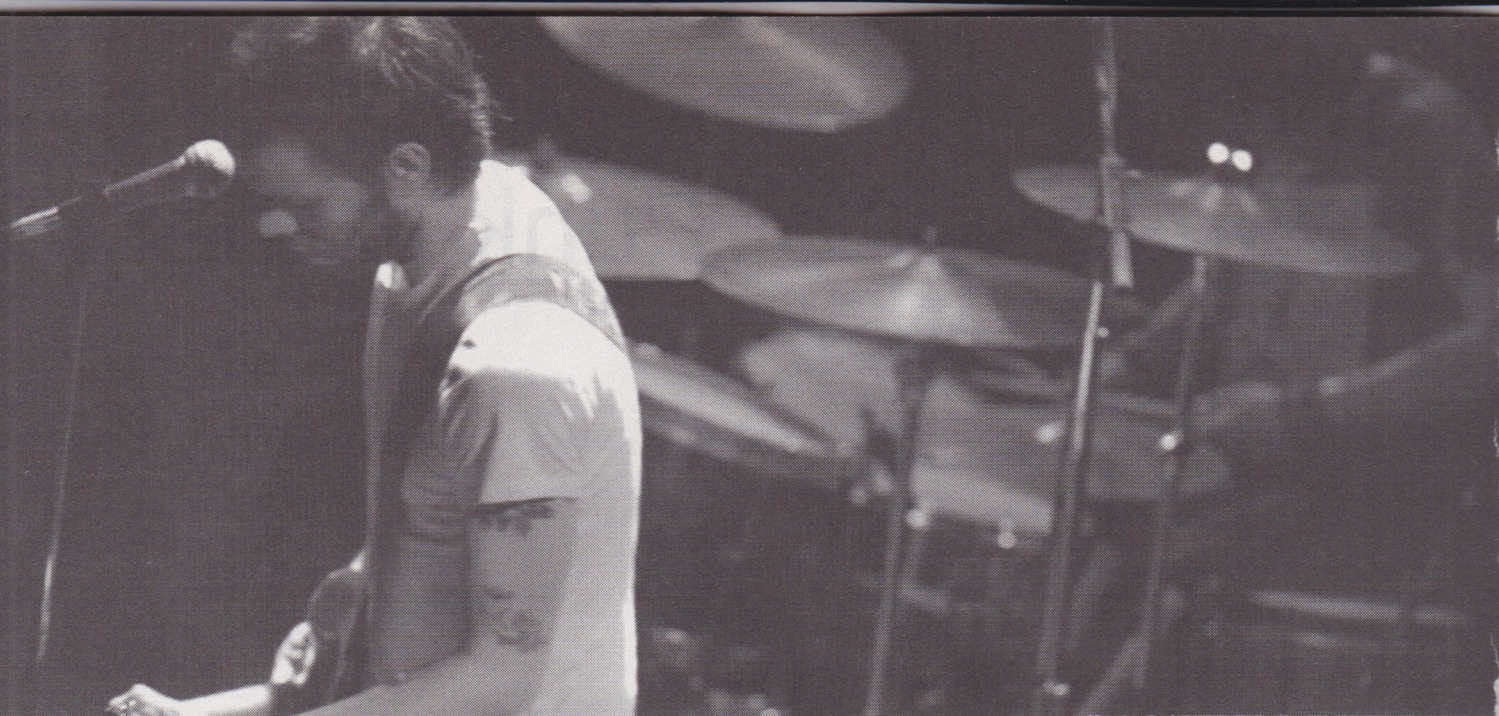
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2 1/8"



* Numerical statistics based on the six-issue run from PP54-59.



When I threatened to stab Ben Nichols, all he did was smile. I was drunk, it was late, and god-damn I was tired. I suppose there's not much you can do when your assailant is on the wrong side of midnight, holding a dull table knife and you're separated by a couple baskets of vegetarian food.

The smile was disarming, however, because Ben Nichols is plagued with a fatal pessimism. As the singer, guitarist, and primary songwriter for Memphis, Tennessee's Lucero, Nichols holds to his mantra that Lucero is going to shoot themselves in the foot every chance they get. He's conflicted with the fact that Lucero doesn't have a niche audience and wonders aloud if he makes music for the right reasons.

But listening to Lucero's Southern mix of alt.country and underground rock and Nichols' lyrics that cut right to heart with a profound simplicity, it doesn't matter. There isn't a right or wrong reason for songs like "The Blue And The Grey," "Raising Hell," and "The Only One." Good songs don't need a reason; they just need to be written. And Lucero's written a couple albums' full.

The rest of the band has their own take on their status as an alt.country band with a punk background. In fact, Brian Venable, Lucero's original guitarist who bailed for a year, says he wanted to play pretty country songs to purposefully clash with the breakneck hardcore

beats he heard at shows. Drummer and neck-beard pioneer Roy Berry says it doesn't matter anyway—Lucero just plays music.

For most bands, that just wouldn't pass. But it works for Lucero. Honest, utterly sincere, and able to fend off a drunken fool with a smile, Nichols and company have a good thing going for them. For our sake, let's hope they don't shoot themselves in the foot.

Interview by **George B Sanchez**

Photos by **Scott MacDonald**

I found a quote from you guys that I want to read—I'm pretty sure it's from Ben. You described Lucero as "an old hardcore kid and an emo kid get together and make country music that the punk rock kids are gonna' hate."

Brian Venable: Who's the emo kid?

John Stubblefield: It better be you.

Ben Nichols: I guess it was me.

That was six months ago. Now you're playing tonight in Berkeley at Gilman Street and there's a huge fucking line out the door.

John: That was the idea of it, to piss off punk rockers. But they wound up loving it.

None of you guys come from a country or country-rock background. Everybody seemed to be playing indie rock or hardcore before Lucero. So does it surprise you how

well you've been received?

Ben: Yeah. I think it's surprising. I never thought we'd make it this far.

Brian: I think if you work and don't quit—I'm not the example though, since I left for a year—eventually anybody will get their chance. Some do it better than other people.

John: Sure, we're playing country music to a certain degree, but we're coming at it from a DIY punk background. That drive and attitude keeps us going more than the typical alt.country band, whatever that is.

Brian: The thing is, we got a younger start than your Uncle Tupelos and Ryan Adams. I mean, Ryan Adams had a punk band when he was a kid, but I don't think that was too serious. We've all been involved in some aspect of punk since we were kids. When we got together, I wanted it to be some hardcore band, us, and His Hero's Gone playing shows together. I just thought it would be fun to actually go into a place like Gilman, and just play country—or something else completely different. I mean, we know these people; we grew up with everybody. I'm still a part of that community, but I happen to play in this alt.country band.

John: And that's what's so awesome about this tour [with Against Me!]. These guys are



LUCERO

younger than us, and they're putting us on their tour to "give them some cred."

Ben: Who said that?

John: Every one of them. Of course, they said that privately and probably won't admit it. [laughs] That's cool though—they're kids that get it.

Ben: The other night Andrew was like, "We're going to call this the Against Me!/Lucero Do You Actually Get It? Tour." I don't think most of these kids do.

John: There are kids who are just laid out on the stage waiting for Against Me!

Brian: A lot of them don't like us.

John: Yeah, but for every four of those, there's one guy that's buying every single CD of ours. They come to see the other band but, for every 300 kids that come to see Against Me!, in couple years, they'll be like, "Oh, I saw that band Lucero." There are kids at these shows that are 14, 16—who don't drink yet, who don't have girlfriends, or whatever.

Ben: Goddamn—in Kansas City, they were babies.

John: For the first couple of songs they didn't know any better and they were just tearing the place up!

Ben: They fucking *danced*.

John: And then they were like, "Wait a minute . . . wait a second . . ."

Ben: ". . . Wait, we don't like this."

John: By the fourth song they were just standing there with their arms crossed.

What you're getting at is, I think, the way people categorize you and how bands are pigeonholed in general—it's hard to break out.

Ben: Yeah. Apparently we're a tough one to pigeon-hole. I love Against Me! You know, I think they are one of my favorite bands right now but no, we are not *exactly* the appropriate band to open for them.

I think that's the fucking cool thing, though. The punk scene is so complacent.

Ben: It fits because it's one musician appreciating another and we're not really that concerned with the crowd getting it or not. We appreciate Against Me! and they, apparently, appreciate us. They want to do a split release with us. ¶ It comes down to the whole reason I play music: I don't know if it's right or not, but the only reason I do it is for me. It gets me through from one day to the next, whether I'm playing to five people or 500. Sometimes I'm playing to five people who love us, who eat it up, and the next night I'm playing to 50 kids to whom we're an obstacle

in the way of enjoying Against Me! Either way, it's what gets me through. I've got no political agenda. I've got no social agenda. I'm just doing it because it's all I can really do and it gets me from one day to the next. We get stuck with one band or the other and it doesn't really matter that much, but, I'm glad to be stuck with this band—quote that.

Brian, why did you leave the band for a year?

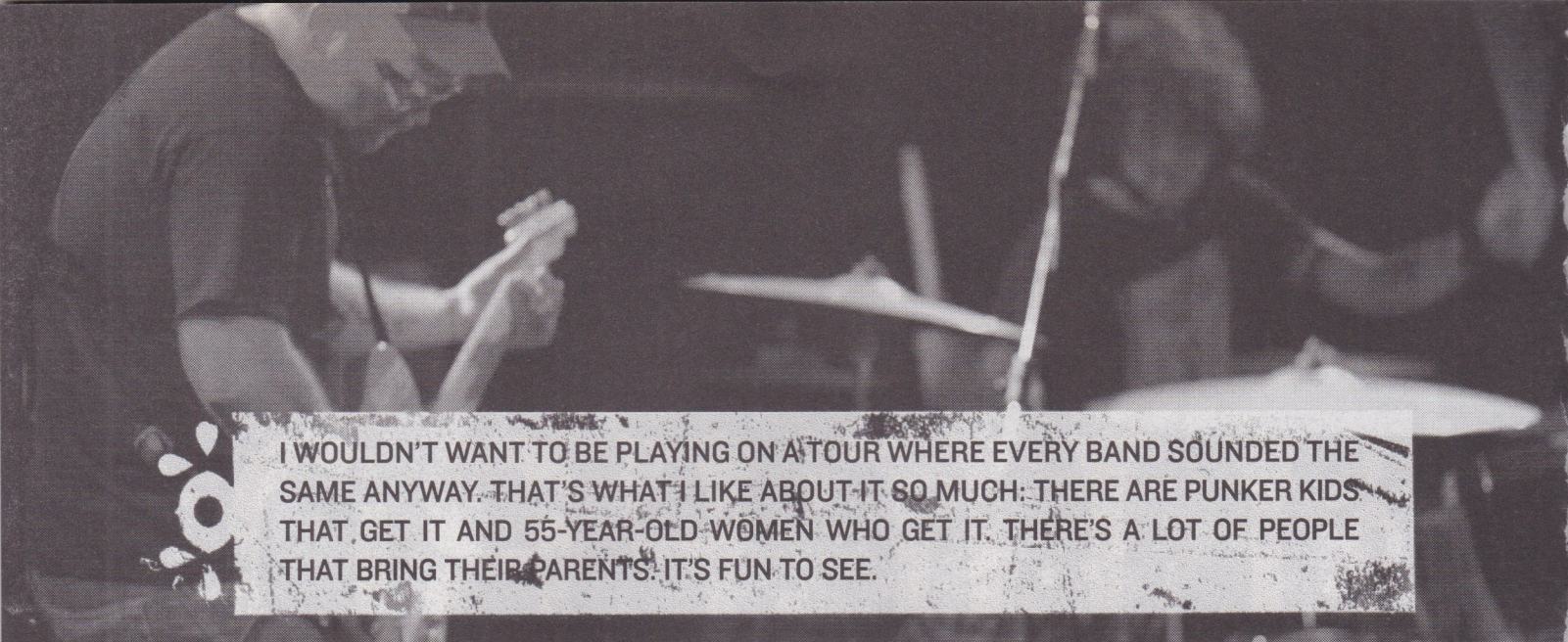
Brian: I got tired of dealing with a lot of shit. It's supposed to be fun, not a job, but it's really a job and I was unprepared for that. Arguing with people who we shouldn't be arguing with, not getting to play what we want to play. It started off fun, playing in-town, getting out of town and touring, putting out a 7". Then we had to start dealing with labels and booking shows . . . ¶ Ben's better at it than me. Everybody's better at it. I missed my home. I didn't have a girlfriend. It's just rugged. You talk to people who don't go on tour, and all they want to do is go on tour, but it's not that much fun. It is fun, but there's a lot of not fun.

Are those issues coming back to you now?

Brian: I took a year off, so I'm OK.

Why'd you come back?

Brian: The Against Me! Tour. But once I started playing again, it was fun.



I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE PLAYING ON A TOUR WHERE EVERY BAND SOUNDED THE SAME ANYWAY. THAT'S WHAT I LIKE ABOUT IT SO MUCH: THERE ARE PUNKER KIDS THAT GET IT AND 55-YEAR-OLD WOMEN WHO GET IT. THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE THAT BRING THEIR PARENTS. IT'S FUN TO SEE.

So there wasn't a big longing in your heart to get back on the road with your friends?

Brian: That came later. ¶ Riding in the van, sleeping, trying to read a magazine, it can be grueling. A lot of bands, at least when you're younger, you'll see bands go out for months and they won't tour for another year. But to make a living at it, you have to drive around two hundred days a year and that'll kill anybody after a while.

That kind of frustration factors into the talk of kids "getting it". Do you feel like there is a crowd or a group that does "get it?"

Ben: I'm not sure. There is a crowd, but they're scattered amongst a wide variety of different musical and social scenes. We have 10 people that go to see Against Me! that like us and we have 10 people who go to see the Northern Mississippi All-stars that like us.

John: That's one of the biggest things I love about playing in this band. There are so many genres of people coming together and enjoying what we're doing. It's not one set of people. That's why this tour is so cool. I wouldn't want to be playing on a tour where every band sounded the same anyway. That's what I like about it so much: there are punker kids that get it and 55-year-old women who get it. There's a lot of people that bring their parents. It's fun to see.

You're talking about how there's a pocket of people that do get it, but I get this sense you also feel lost between all these different types of bands.

John: I like to think we're 10 years ahead of our time. In 10 years, we're going to kill ourselves from touring to death and put out records and then one day we'll just stop. Ten years later, it'll be like Big Star—people will be citing us as influences.

Ben: We're going to be Big Star for some future Replacements.

Is that what it really feels like?

Ben: We're going to shoot ourselves in the foot every chance we get. We're gonna run ourselves into the ground, but we will be a humongous influence on some kid some day who becomes a very popular, renowned musician.

John: There was an article in Missoula that said we're 10 years too late.

I don't see you guys as too late. You're right now. Alt.country has become a genre that has been commodified by the music industry . . .

Ben: You don't want to be alt.country like you don't want to be emo.

Wait, wait—I wasn't finished asking my question!

Ben: It's true, it's fucking true and don't act like it's not.

Well, the fact of the matter is Columbia records is re-releasing all the old Uncle Tupelo records, Old 97s was on a major, Ryan Adams is on a major. If Lucero got offered a deal from a major, what would you guys do?

John: Shoot ourselves in the foot.

Ben: We'd shoot ourselves in the foot, that's exactly what we'd do. I've heard way too many stories. Maybe I've read *Punk Planet* way too many times.

John: I just don't see it being a good thing.

Ben: No, it *can't* be good thing.

John: I mean, if you're talking about us signing to Vagrant and going on tour with Merle Haggard, that makes sense.

Ben: Which would be weird because he's on Anti. Anti, I would be interested in.

John: We all know the bonus ain't free. Every ad you see in a magazine for someone on a label, they're paying for it out of their pocket.

Ben: If I wanted to quit—if I wanted to cash in—I would take as much money as I could from a major and it would slowly eat us up. But I don't want to quit and I don't like being told what to do, so I figure Tiger Style was a good move. ☺



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blow-back *n.* 1. A slang term originally derived by the US State Department, or CIA, or both that refers to the unintended and unforeseen negative consequences of aggressive foreign policy decisions. 2. a euphemism for 'we really fucked up this time'

Since September 11, 2001 it's been impossible to turn on the television, listen to the radio, read the paper, or eavesdrop on a conversation without hearing the attack on the World Trade Center mentioned. Despite the fact that no unequivocal link has been traced between the attack by Al Qaeda and Iraq, stories of the war continue to evoke this memory. It's been given a whole slew of titles—9/11, Nine-one-one, the day that changed the world, the day the terrorists attacked America, the day football stopped—the list goes on and on. Recently, a more useful term to describe September 11, and other backlashes against the United States' foreign policy, has been popping up in the media: Blowback.

The CIA began using the term Blowback in the 1980s when the Carter and Reagan Administrations pushed the agency to get involved in the bloody civil war brewing between the Soviet Union and the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. Under George Bush (the first one), the CIA secretly armed and trained thousands of Mujahedeen volunteers, to fight against the Soviets. It was believed that the US and Mujahedeen had an enemy in common and, since direct military action was not an option, plan B was to nurture an army that would fight the USSR by proxy. The CIA knew very little about the Afghan volunteers at the time. However, even if they had no way of predicting that the volunteers would use the oppor-

tunity to form a brutal totalitarian regime in Afghanistan and spur an international terrorist ring causing destruction in several countries including the US, it hardly seems responsible to imbue extensive military training and weaponry on a combatant population without taking measures to constrain it after it's completed its purpose.

If you look back through the last hundred years, you will find countless examples of blowback: the failed assassination attempts on Fidel Castro in Cuba and Patrice Lumumba in the Republic of Congo, the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, the "secret war" in Laos, providing aid to Greek colonels who seized power in 1967, the assassination of Salvador Allende. These examples did not result in such dramatic consequences on American soil as they did on September 11, 2001, however, the cumulative death toll of such actions has been estimated at over 8,000,000 worldwide. Look close enough and it is hard to find a single action taken by the CIA in matters of foreign policy that has not spilled blood, and caused devastation somewhere in the world.

In 1967 Chalmers Johnson got a job as a consultant for the CIA. At the time, Johnson was teaching at UC Berkeley and staunchly defended the war in Vietnam in his classes, even when the campus was erupting in protest against it. During his work as a consultant, Johnson was surprised to find that the finest research of a billion dollar spy agency was on par with that of a graduate student thesis. Reading internal documents brought Johnson to the conclusion that the CIA could afford to be so terrible at information-gathering and political analysis because its primary purpose was

covert operations—employing violence and assassination to further American interests.

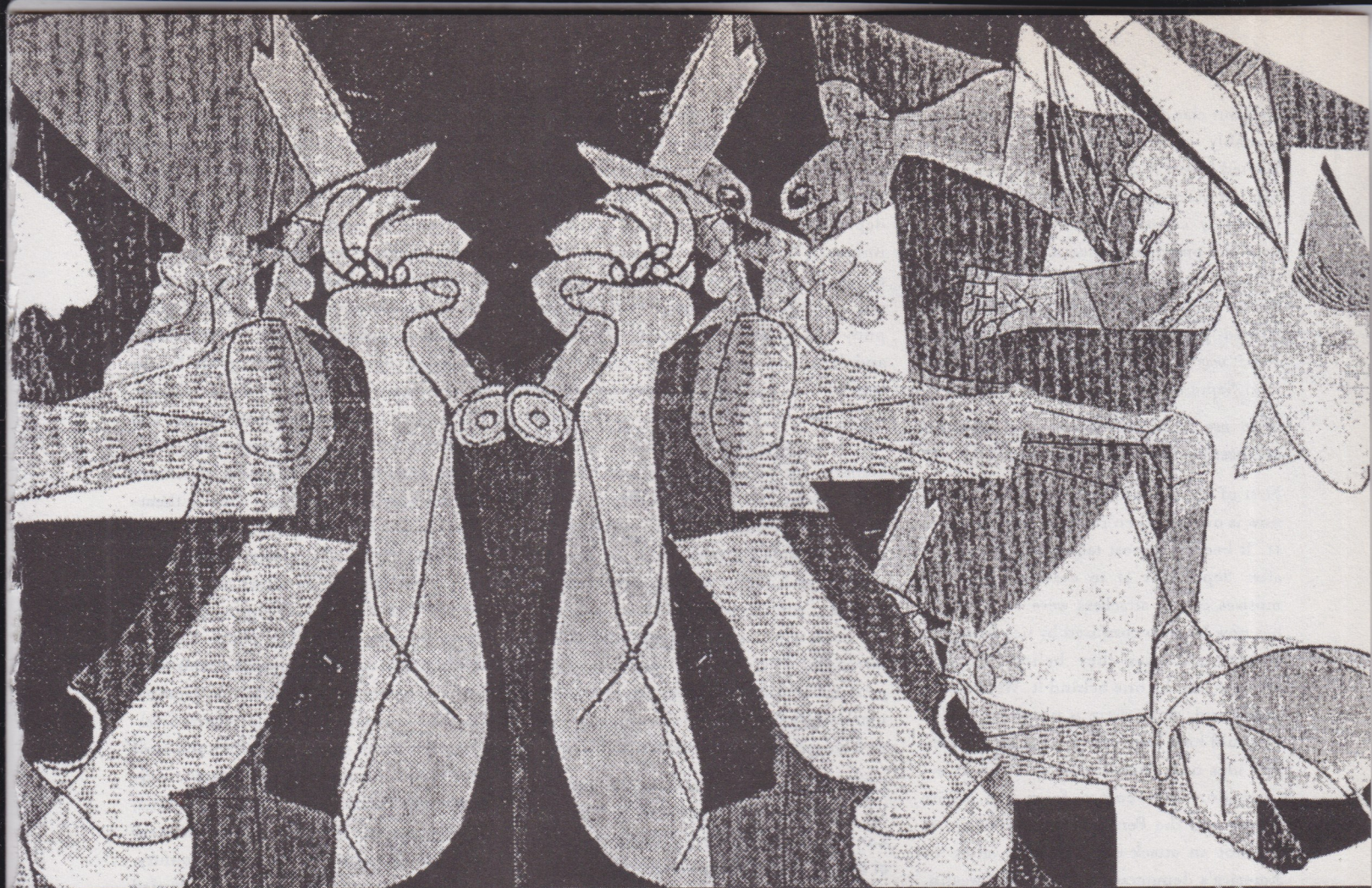
Not long after Johnson's time there, CIA director Richard Helms, the man who had recruited Johnson as a consultant was convicted of lying under oath to Congress about the CIA's role in the coup against Chilean president Salvador Allende.

However, it was not until the collapse of the Soviet Union that Johnson began to question the intentions of US foreign policy. He found it difficult to justify our vast network of military bases throughout the world without the threat of Communism. It seemed unnecessary for the US to sustain such a significant military presence during peacetime in spite of public outcry from citizens in many of the host countries. Johnson began to wonder: has the worldwide expansion of US military presence transformed from a preventative strategy into a goal in itself?

In his book *Blowback* published in 2000, Johnson noted Osama bin Laden as a case in which the CIA had created a mess that could not easily be swept under the rug. Bin Laden—a former CIA operative who saw US troops stationed in Saudi Arabia as an affront to his religious beliefs—had already been connected with the bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

Chalmers Johnson teaches political science at UC San Diego and is the president of the Japan Policy Research Institute. He served in the Navy during the Korean War. After a lifetime as a supporter of Cold War foreign policy, Johnson's most recent books *Blowback* (2000) and *Sorrows of Empire* (2004) present thorough critiques of the US shift toward empire building and its repercussions of ongoing warfare.

Interview by David Ross



CHALMERS JOHNSON BLOWBACK

A year before the September 11 attacks, you wrote *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, where you predicted that events such as those might be a possible result of US foreign policy. Where does the term "blowback" come from and what are its causes?

"Blowback" is a CIA term. It was first invented after the CIA intervention against the government of Iran in 1953 when we overthrew an elected government for the interests of the British and American petroleum industries. "Blowback" refers to

the unintended consequences of clandestine policies that have been kept secret from the American public. I think it's important to stress that any policy may have unintended consequences, but here we're talking about unintended consequences of policies that the public knows *nothing* about and, therefore, has no context within which to place them. ¶ My analysis was that the things we had done during the Cold War, and the first decade after the Cold War, were generating almost uncontrollable blowback. I did not, obviously,

specifically anticipate anything like September 11, but I certainly did anticipate and predict terrorist acts against Americans—military and civilian, abroad and at home—and therefore, was not particularly surprised when the attacks came on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September of 2001. At the time, I did not think that they were necessarily Islamic terrorists; I thought they could have been from Argentina, Chile, Indonesia, Okinawa, Greece, or any number of places on earth where we have car-

What are some instances of past blowback and possible future blowback against the US?

I think people don't understand the history of US foreign policy in other parts of the world. Can you give us a historical thumbnail sketch of the U.S. involvement in South Korea?

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ALMERS
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BLOWBACK

**The Costs and
Consequences of
American Empire**

ROBERT K. JOHNSON

"Gunning and shooting . . . He saw his exposed shortightedness, hubris, corruption, and inability of our country's imperial government with such impassioned lucubrations. *Blowback* is a wake up call for America."—*Wade H. Gerson, author of Enduring Secret, winner of the National Book Award*

Can you give us a thumbnail sketch of US involvement in Japan?

We created satellites in East Asia after

World War II in the areas that we had conquered for more or less the same reasons that the Soviet Union created satellites in Eastern Europe. ¶ One of the reasons for writing *Blowback* was the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the disappearance of the menace of the Soviet Union. The United States, far from demobilizing and trying to generate a peace dividend, was instead doing everything in its power throughout the 1990s to shore up cold war structures in East Asia and expand our empire of military bases into the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Central Asia. ¶ This old structure isn't holding up very well, most significantly in the economic situation. Economics was the one thing that was really differentiated our satellites from the Soviet Union's satellites. We told Japan and South Korea that in return for allowing us to station American forces on their soil, we would give them free and open access to the American market. And more importantly, we would tolerate their protectionism, allowing them to develop their own economies at our expense. When we said this in the early 1950s we couldn't imagine that they could ever become economic competitors. ¶ It has now come to the point where East Asia is quite industrialized. It produces the largest trade surpluses in economic history, and they've flooded the US market and basically turned the table on us economically. These trade relations are no longer to our advantage. At some point, the economic consequences of our empire will bankrupt us, which is one of the sorrows of empire that I talk about in my new book. ¶ Meanwhile, American military bases in places like Okinawa have produced volcanic anti-American sentiment. These military bases continue to generate incidents—sexual violence, accidents, pollution, airplane crashes, etc.—that build long-term distrust and dislike. What we're seeing is textbook case of the early stages of a revolution, in which a subordinated population slowly develops attitudes and alliances to metamorphose into organized resistance movements against an imperialist power.

You've written that the Asian financial crisis was actually caused by US interests in order to weaken the Asian economic tigers and keep them in their place.

MY ANALYSIS WAS THAT THE THINGS WE HAD DONE DURING THE COLD WAR, AND THE FIRST DECADE AFTER THE COLD WAR, WERE GENERATING ALMOST UNCONTROLLABLE BLOWBACK. I DID NOT, OBVIOUSLY, SPECIFICALLY ANTICIPATE ANYTHING LIKE 9-11, BUT I CERTAINLY DID ANTICIPATE AND PREDICT TERRORIST ACTS AGAINST AMERICANS—MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, ABROAD AND AT HOME.



One of the things that worried the United States in the 1980s was that it had become the world's largest net debtor nation, while Japan became the world's largest creditor nation. Right away, this should have been a clue that this relationship needed to change, but we didn't act. Instead, the Japanese clung to us more tightly and we enjoyed having them as our satellite in permanent orbit around a foreign policy. Over time, however, this situation became more and more unstable and we became deeply concerned that Japan was becoming such a rich and powerful manufacturing country. All you have to do is look at the cars in any American parking lot to see what I'm talking about; plus virtually all consumer electronics are made in Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan at this point. ¶ Therefore, there's no question to me that we used organizations that act as our surrogates—the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization—to destabilize various nations in East Asia and to reinstate their subordination. ¶ It was a shocking development for the Asian economic tigers. They've slowly begun to recover from it, but it's left these countries with a bitter taste, now that they see the United States is a fickle, dangerous bedfellow. The same can be said for Argentina, which was formerly the fine pupil of American economic theories. And if you look to Ecuador and Venezuela, you'll find that huge anti-

American movements have risen out of the great poverty imposed by the IMF there. ¶ These attitudes are now spreading at a tremendous rate. It's difficult to predict if or when or how the American empire will crumble. I would predict that our military is so strong, I don't really expect it to occur on military grounds. But I do think we can expect a very serious economic crisis in the not-too-distant future. The attempt to dominate the entire globe militarily is an extremely expensive proposition, and one that we simply can't sustain. The United States has the largest trade deficits ever recorded in economic history and today are running at around five percent of GDP. Since we save almost nothing in this country, our financial markets are buoyed on capital imports from savings-oriented countries, particularly those in East Asia. It's only a matter of time that these countries decide that the United States is not a safe place to invest and turn to alternatives, such as the emerging European Union. If this were to happen, the United States would sink into an abysmal deflation. If that happens I'm not sure that we could dig our way out, and I think at that point we'd be hard-pressed to find an ally the rest of the world wouldn't be too busy singing, "ding dong the witch is dead." ©

David Ross hosts a talk show called "Digging up the Dirt" on KMUD radio in Redway, California.



This discussion had to happen. Not the one between James Spooner and I, but the one prompted by Spooner's film *Afro-Punk: the rock n' roll nigger experience*. For all of punk's egalitarian posturing, discussions on race, ethnicity, tokenism, privilege, and sex tend to conveniently fall to the wayside. When these issues are reared, they're usually applauded as a political statement but dead on the floor the minute the music stops. Outside the shows, the songs and statements continue to be marginalized as a "black thing," a "queer thing" or a "women's thing." It's easy to assume our participation within a historically liberal subculture makes us unsusceptible to the same follies of the "mainstream" we mock. The problem is we're a lot closer to the mainstream than we have ever cared to admit.

James Spooner's 66-minute film is not a comprehensive history of black punk rockers. Instead, *Afro-Punk* is a blatantly raw and urgent, uncompromised instigation of a discussion that has taken place in the back of clubs and between late-night philosophers, but never dealt with so nakedly and obtrusively. It is rightfully uncomfortable, because there is no escaping the fact that race—even among punks—still makes us uncomfortable. It must be easy to pass race off as a social construct, as someone says in the film, when white privilege allows you to slink back into the mainstream once the accoutrements of subculture are discarded. But before a Black, Asian, or Latino punk is a punk, s/he is first socialized as Black, Asian, or Latino. At the end of the day most punks throughout North America consider themselves white.

When asked if he was punk, James proudly told a Chicago viewer that "Before anything, I'm a Black man." Face it, in 2004, a proud person of color still makes some folks uneasy, and maybe that's one of the reasons the issue is so sensitive, even among us punks. However, ignoring the elephant in the living room doesn't make the beast disappear.

Maybe *Afro-Punk* will be a catalyst for change, but I'm not holding my breath, because not until our subculture truly becomes a counter culture will this discussion really progress. But then again, we punks, like the mainstream, have been in the same place for a long time, haven't we?

Interview by **George B Sanchez** Illustration by **Patrick Leger**

AFRO PUNK

FILMMAKER
JAMES SPOONER

In screening *Afro-punk*, what has the reaction from white audiences been?

I have had certain film festival screenings where there have been a lot of white people. When that happens, there's a different feeling in the air. It was really apparent in the Midwest.

What cities are you talking about?

Wichita; Rock Island, Illinois; Lawrence, Kansas; and in Minneapolis—those are all places that it was completely silent in the parts where the film was obviously funny. *Completely* silent. After the film was finished, people usually start clapping, but it was still dead. It wasn't until it was *completely* over that people were like, "Oh, we're supposed to clap now." In Rock Island, I did a Q&A afterwards and there were no questions.

Did you bring that up to the audience?

I didn't know what to do at first. It was a completely new experience for me. I didn't take it as an insult, I took it as a complement. It wasn't like people were walking out or anything, it was just like, "Wow, we weren't expecting this. I didn't know that I was going to be subject to an hour long, hard-core discussion on race." I think it was the first time a lot of white people subjected themselves to something that was not made for them, you know what I'm saying?

What do you mean by that exactly?

I think that everything in America is marketed towards white people. When something is *not* marketed towards them, they don't know what the hell to do. This film is not for white people. They can see it and I hope that they get something from it—if they're the kind of individuals who are open-minded and are willing to admit that they have privilege, maybe they will come away with something—but for the most part, this film was made for people of

color. White people just don't know what to do with the information.

Did you probe them for questions? Did you say much, or did everybody just get up and walk out?

People came up afterwards. Individuals were like "Thanks, people in the audience really needed to see that film,"—somehow excluding themselves from those people who really needed to see it, you know? The questions that white folks ask are really safe, like, "Where'd you get that Bad Brains footage?" or "How long did it take to make?" But when I'm in an audience of people of color, technical issues are *never* brought up. People talk about the content of the film. I understand it's really hard to have inter-racial discussions on race, but . . .

Whether or not it's difficult, it needs to happen.

It just solidified stuff for me. In every place where that one black kid did come away with a "Wow, thank you so much for coming all the way out here for me," it just showed me more. We were in Minneapolis—in a black neighborhood—and there was *one* black person in the audience outside of the people that I brought. It was like these kids are so out of touch with people of color, they don't even understand. To have a punk space in a black neighborhood and not even be able to attract black people to come? You know what I'm saying.

We first met when you screened *Afro-punk* at the Black Harvest Film Festival in Chicago. At the Q&A you said that you had made the film for yourself and you needed to find the people featured in it to be OK with yourself. Why?

When I started the film, I had only really started the process of finding myself as a black man. I was really going through it and analyzing all these years of self-hate and I really needed to prove to myself that even though my life wasn't a typical black experi-

ence, it was still valid as a black experience. I didn't really know that many black people outside of my family—and I live in New York, it's not like they're hard to find. I was living in a neighborhood that used to be Puerto Rican but was now all white hipsters. I guess after high school, my ability to have access to people of color just wasn't there. It was something that if I wanted it, I had to make moves to get it.

You had to actively seek it out?

Yeah. I had to start going to parties where there were black people. I started talking to the few black people I knew who had similar experiences and it just made sense to start putting this on tape.

Logistically, how did you start that process?

Well, it was pretty simple. I figured out that if I wanted to make this film, the first thing I was going to have to do was find people for it, so I had to get on the Internet. I didn't even own a computer—I hadn't used a computer since *Oregon Trail* days—but I had a friend who was a computer geek, so I was like, "This is what I need: Internet access, word processing, and I need to be able to edit my film." He told me what to get and ordered it for me. I had no idea what I was getting. When I got it in the mail, it was like a \$2,000 CD player that I didn't know how to set up. But he helped me out and I went online and did a Google search for "punk." There were like 5000 sites and I just started e-mailing everybody, because I figured there's at least one black person in every scene. I just e-mailed randomly—this person is in North Carolina, this person is from Seattle . . . there's gotta be a black person in every scene. Out of all those e-mails, people were like, "Hey check out this guy." I also went on punkplanet.com and stuff like that and I'd ask people to name as many punk bands with black people as they could. From there I started collecting names.

I HAVE A LOT OF IDEAS AS TO THE STEPS THAT WE NEED TO MAKE TO HAVE MORE POWER IN THIS COUNTRY.



So when did you start traveling and meeting people?

I started doing the research in December. I got my camera in March. I went traveling to do interviews in August—this was 2001. I did 20-some-odd interviews that month.

Of those, you narrowed it down to four main characters. Why?

I thought they all represented different stages of black identity. Some of them were people I had already been and some of them were people I was striving to be.

How comfortable was everybody? Those were pretty intimate issues to talk about.

For the most part, they were pretty comfortable, I think because I came from a place of sincerity. If I was a white person asking these questions, or a black person who wasn't involved in the scene, maybe they would think that I was trying to exploit them, but I didn't come at them with any kind of hate. For the most part, people were pretty comfortable. But there were some that didn't know how to answer because they had never been asked questions like that before.

I think you kept a couple instances of that in the film.

Definitely. When I did that tour, I remember thinking, "Wow man, I just fucked up a lot of kids just by asking them regular questions." I know for sure at least one person dropped out of the scene right after our interview.

Why was that?

She told me she had been thinking about this stuff for a long time and after doing the interview, it solidified a lot of stuff for her. When we came, she was just so excited that there were black people there to see her. She was just like, "What am I doing? Why am I wasting my time with this—my passion is for my people and I'm sitting

here screaming at a bunch of white kids. It's futile." I know since she doesn't really hang out in the scene that much anymore. She's trying to find other spaces that have political people of color.

Have people of color come up to you to talk about being stirred up?

People always come up to me after the filming and tell me they really want to go out of their way to try to find other people of color to be in a band with. The film has caused people of color to seek out other people of color, which is a wonderful thing. The website has also helped to do that. The community board has kind of taken on a life of its own. It's really cool, I'm really happy that there's life beyond the screen. That's what I'm trying to do, to create change.

But at the same time, there's no proper resolution in the film. Was that a conscious decision?

Well each individual has a conclusion. Moe talks about how he has his black community, but he wouldn't be the person who he was if he was just like "peace guys" to his white friends. Tamar Kali talks about striving to have more black people to play her music for. Mariko, she ends with saying "I'm just starting to figure this stuff out and I'm confused," so she's admitting to the things that, previous to the film, she wasn't. I don't believe in wrapping things up in a nice bow. I want to give the audience something to think about, to come up with their own conclusions for their own lives. That's why I say this film is for people of color. White people, they watch it and, well, what are their conclusions? It isn't talking to them. For people of color, they have to walk away and think, "All of the things they're talking about, I've experienced—now what?" Everyone's conclusion is going to be different, but I hope that it leads towards our liberation.

When you say "liberation," are you talking psychological, emotional, or are you actually talking social?

I think all of those things are relevant. I can't sit here and talk about how I'm going to actualize liberation if I haven't figured it out for myself yet. I have a lot of ideas as to the steps that we need to make to have more power in this country, but none of those things are relevant if we are still hating ourselves as individuals or as a community. I always say that revolution starts from within and then your family and then your neighborhood and then your surrounding community and outwards, you know.

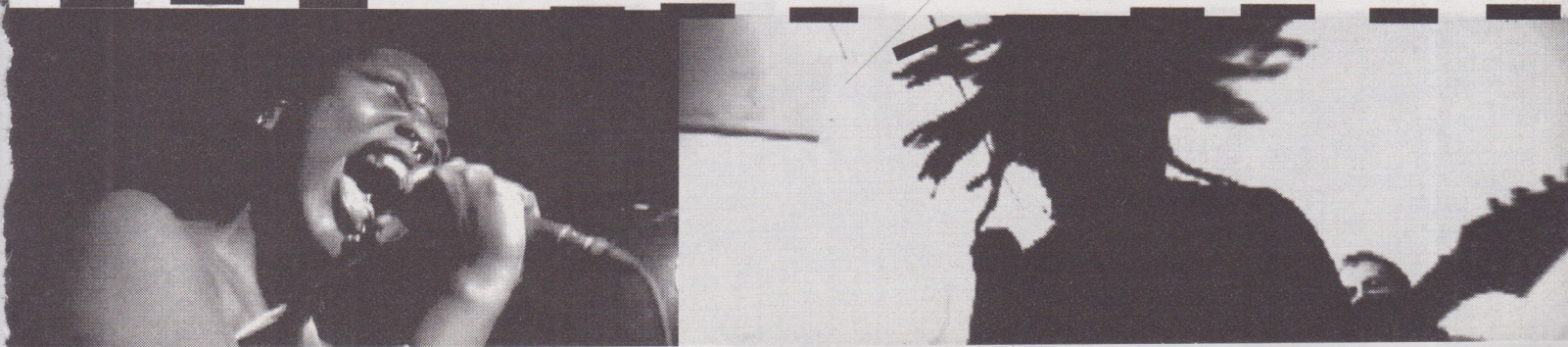
You keep saying this film isn't really for white people, but, inevitably, white people are going to show up and check it out. Is there anything you hope they go away with?

You know, honestly, it doesn't matter to me. I appreciate them coming.

In the film, Tamar says, "Administering to our community has always been the hard part. Folks on my block need to hear my music." Was that one of your guiding principles?

Yeah. You know, I screened at the Anarchist People of Color conference in Detroit. It was great. It was like being a celebrity and going to the mall. It was just like, "Wow, everyone's about it." It was non-stop. When people laugh at the dedication—when it says this is dedicated to every black person who has been called a nigger and every white kid who thinks they know what that means—I know that's a good crowd. That part immediately puts white people on the defense. That's fine. They need to be on the defensive. It's the first time we're on the offensive. Screening for that crowd was gratifying and I needed it after screening to all those white crowds, but that's not even the core of who needs to see it.

BUT NONE OF THOSE THINGS ARE RELEVANT IF WE ARE STILL HATING OURSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS OR AS A COMMUNITY.



Who is the core than?

I don't want to say that they're not the core, but I think there's definitely something to be said about preaching to the converted.

Yeah, those people already know the issues you're talking about.

People who define themselves as anarchists or are there for political reasons—they're already there with the intention of liberation. That was the biggest choir I'll ever screen to. But at the same time, sometimes the choir needs practice, you know what I'm saying? I get great satisfaction when I screen to real, average, black folks—whether they be bourgeoisie black folk or kids from the hood or whatever. When I was in Chicago someone was like "I always used to see these kind of kids in high school, but I just thought they wouldn't want to talk to me because I thought they were into Satan or Nazis. Now, I know that if I see one, they're my brother too, so I can go talk to them." It's like, yo what more can I ask for?

Did you expect this film to take on the life that it has?

Oh god no. I thought that I would screen it in New York once and that all the black people who would be interested would see it, then I thought I would be forced to screen it to a bunch of white punk kids across the country. I thought maybe I'd get into a couple black film festivals, but I never thought that I would be in Toronto or being invited to Africa—that was not even an idea!

Or that BET was going to pay attention.

Yeah—to get a big-ass thing on BET. I just didn't expect it. Somebody who worked at HBO asked to see it. He was a black person who was involved in the punk scene. He was really into it and took it to his superior. He said that they liked it too, but it was too music driven. I don't know, I think that that's a convenient excuse. ¶ The other day

I was watching that movie *American Pimp*. I was watching it and I was like, "This movie is so not made for us. This movie is totally made for white people." They're saying "I'm not going to work at *your* McDonalds, I'm not going to work at *your* post office." They're talking to white people—it's like total buffoonery, coonery. This movie was not made for people of color. To have anything that is expressly made for the liberation of our people doesn't benefit *them*; it doesn't benefit white people for us to be benefited. That's why I keep coming back to the fact that we need to stop worrying about being validated by them. We need to create our own *everything*.

Do you think you would have that idea if you hadn't come from a DIY punk background?

No. I think it gives me a proven example to point at and say, "Look we can do it." If a bunch of 14- to 24-year-olds can create a whole community that has nothing to do with corporate anything, we can do the same thing. Sure, it's a lot easier to fall into saying "Well, I'll just do this because they're going to hand me a hundred-thousand dollar check," but it's not the same as creating it.

You're in debt from making this film, aren't you?

I'm actually not in much debt because I paid it off as I went. There's a couple thousand dollars I owe on my credit card, but it's not like I owe anyone a hundred-thousand dollars. I'm not getting anything for the movie, it's just the love. The fact of the matter is I'll go out, I'll make a movie, I'll sell some T-shirts, it's all good, you know? I mean, yeah, I had to quit my job and move back in with my mom so I could finish this dang thing, but that's not going to be the case forever. I have something to do and I know there are people out there who are willing to hear it. I just have to be direct in what I'm trying to do.

What about other black filmmakers. What is

their reaction when you bring up some of these ideas of self-sufficiency?

When I bring up creating a new black Hollywood? I had a really great discussion about it in Toronto. Here we are at this film festival, which is regarded as one of the top three in the world, and we're part of this one section, the "Planet Africa" section that there's probably about 10 films in. I was sitting at this dinner with 10 filmmakers—of those ten, someone is going to be the next Spike Lee, you know what I'm saying? We are the ones who can potentially change shit. So it's like, what are we going to do about it? Are we going to settle for being that two percent—the lucky two percent that gets a film made through Hollywood? That's the figure—only two percent of films that come out in Hollywood are black-themed. Are we going to settle for that? ¶ In the early 1900s, we had our own movie houses, our own audiences, and we had the option to tell stories that weren't complete baffoonery, that were told by us. In Nigeria, they had this really hot video community. Movies get made and they get released straight to video. There are video stores on every corner and everyone in Nigeria just sees movies on video. Maybe it's not as glamorous as the red carpet in Hollywood, but the entire community sees the film, the stories get told, and I'm sure the filmmakers are eating. ¶ So it's like, *what is important?* Some people in Toronto were down and some people were like, "That's a lot of work—who's going to be the one to start this?" Somebody's *gotta* start it.

So are you gonna be the one?

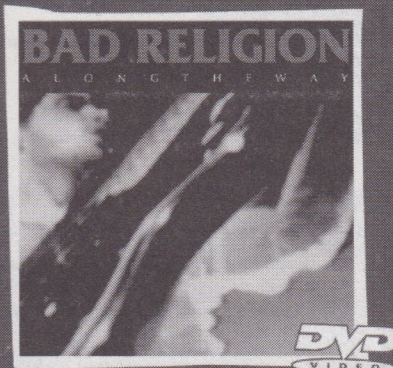
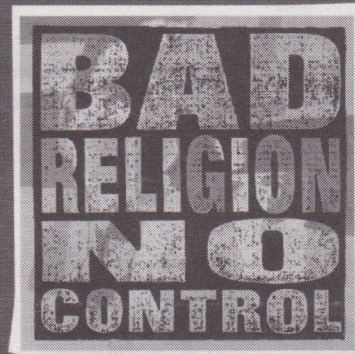
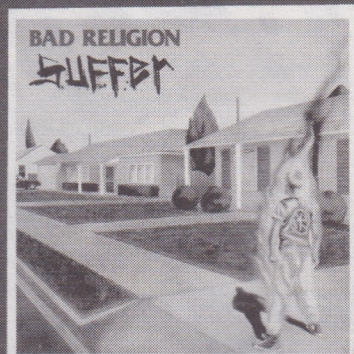
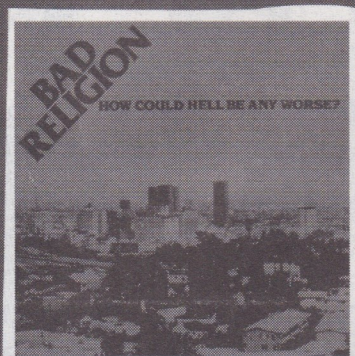
I don't know. I'm going to do what feels right and if that means getting my film distributed through all the bodegas, then that's the way it's going to go. If that means dealing with an equitable corporation—if that even exists—then I'll have those meetings and find out what kind of interests they have. We're in a weird place because there are no models for this. It's not like the record industry where there are already independent labels and independent distributors. ©

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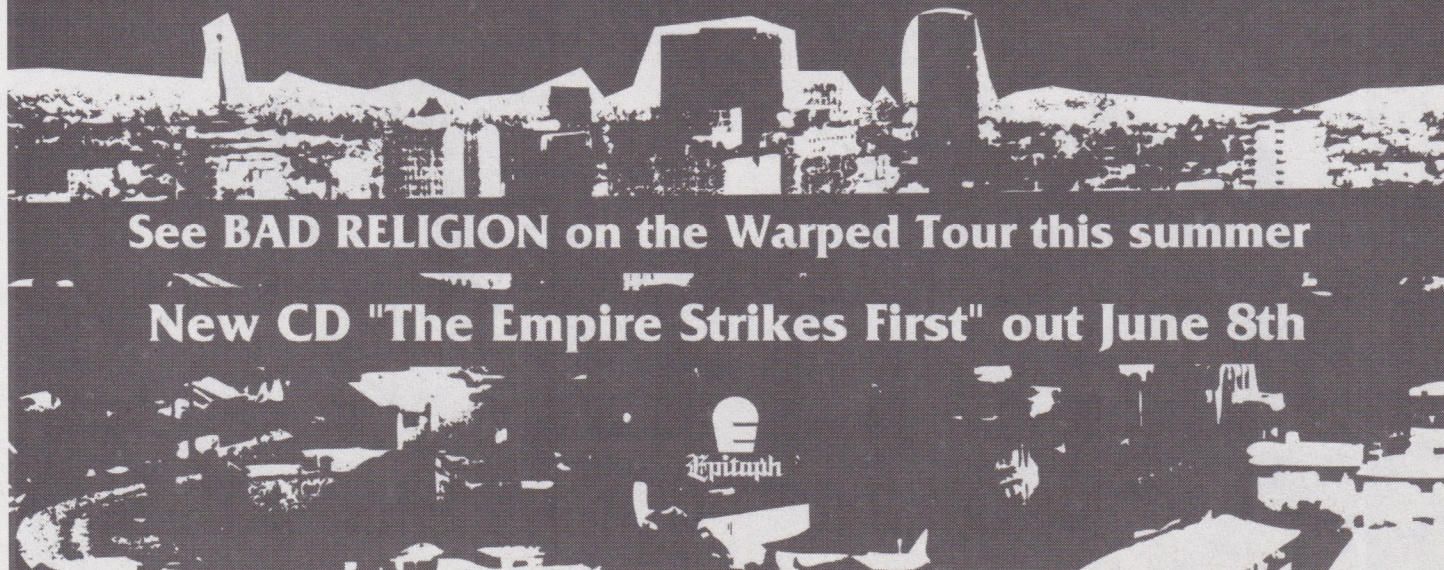
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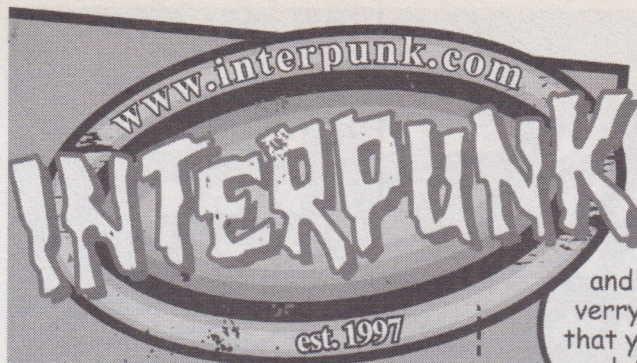
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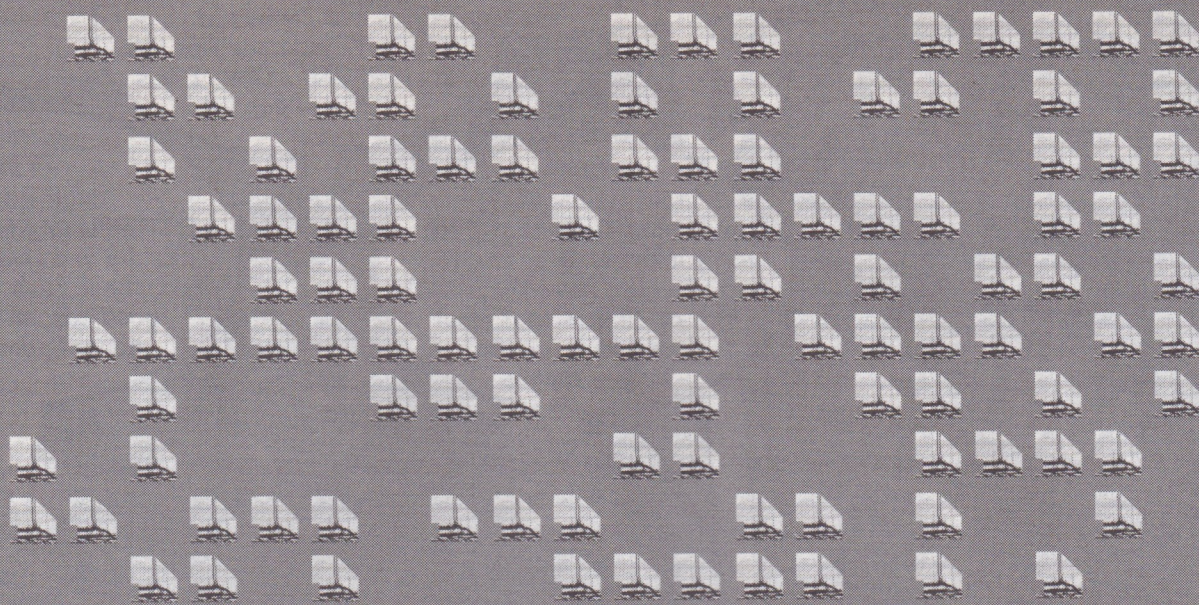


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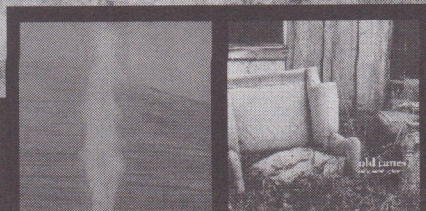
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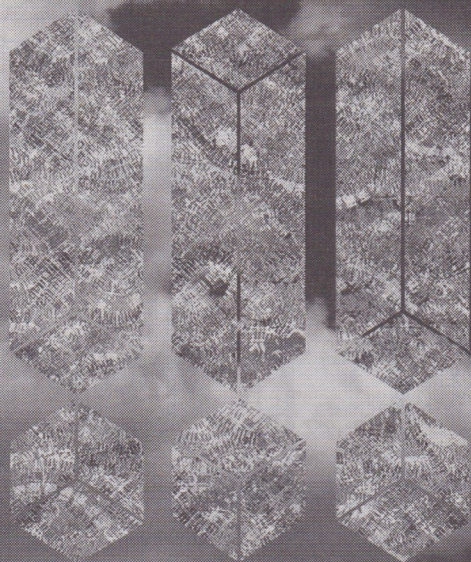
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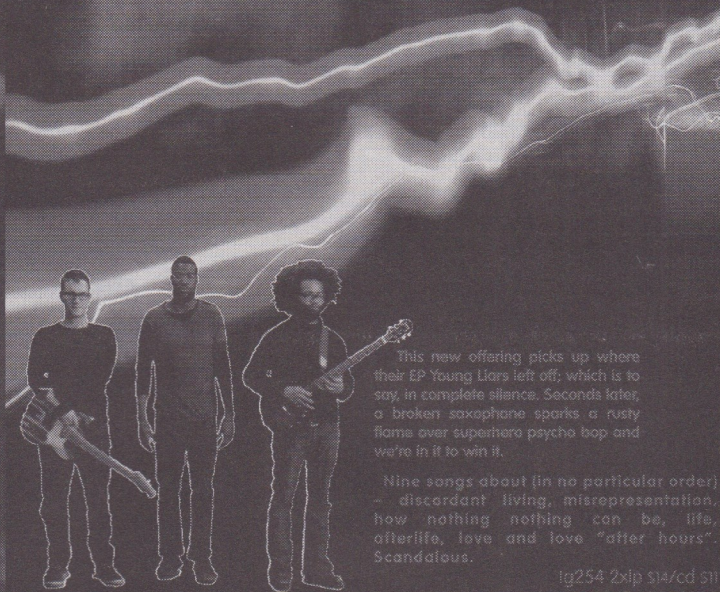
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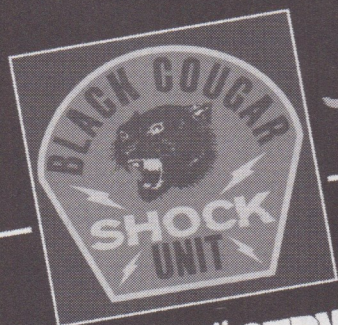
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SYNERGY, INDIE STYLE

AS LABELS, ZINES AND PUBLICISTS BLEND TOGETHER IN THE INDEPENDENT-MUSIC WORLD, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST CAN SLIP BY UNNOTICED

BY KYLE RYAN ILLUSTRATION BY SERIGRAPHIE POPULAIRE

Linkin Park Steps Out . . . Who says nice guys can't finish first?" asks the headline in the Jan. 28, 2002, issue of *Time* magazine. Below lies a 1,500-word story about the band, who sold more records than anybody else in 2001, that calls their songs "sweetly humanistic" and extolls their work ethic. It's a pretty straight-up profile of a popular band, the type you'd expect from a mainstream news magazine like *Time*.

Mentioned only in passing in the story is that Linkin Park is on Warner Music, which, at the time, was a division of Time Warner, the parent company of *Time* (and numerous others). The story never directly mentions that *Time* and Linkin Park's label are owned by the same corporation.

Critics in the independent community would easily scoff at such a seemingly blatant display of corporate synergy: one of the world's largest media companies using one of its divisions for the benefit of the other. They'd call it a textbook example of why we should all be wary of corporate media.

Synergy, though, isn't just reserved for big corporations.

In the April 2004 issue of the indie monthly *American Music Press* (*AMP*), there's an interview with Swedish band Henry Fiat's Open Sore. After gushing about the band for several paragraphs, writer Aphid Peewit says, "But find out for yourself what all the hype is about: go out to your favorite punk record store (I don't think Best Buy's gonna have it for you) or the Coldfront website and pick up copies of as much Henry Fiat shit you can get your hands on."

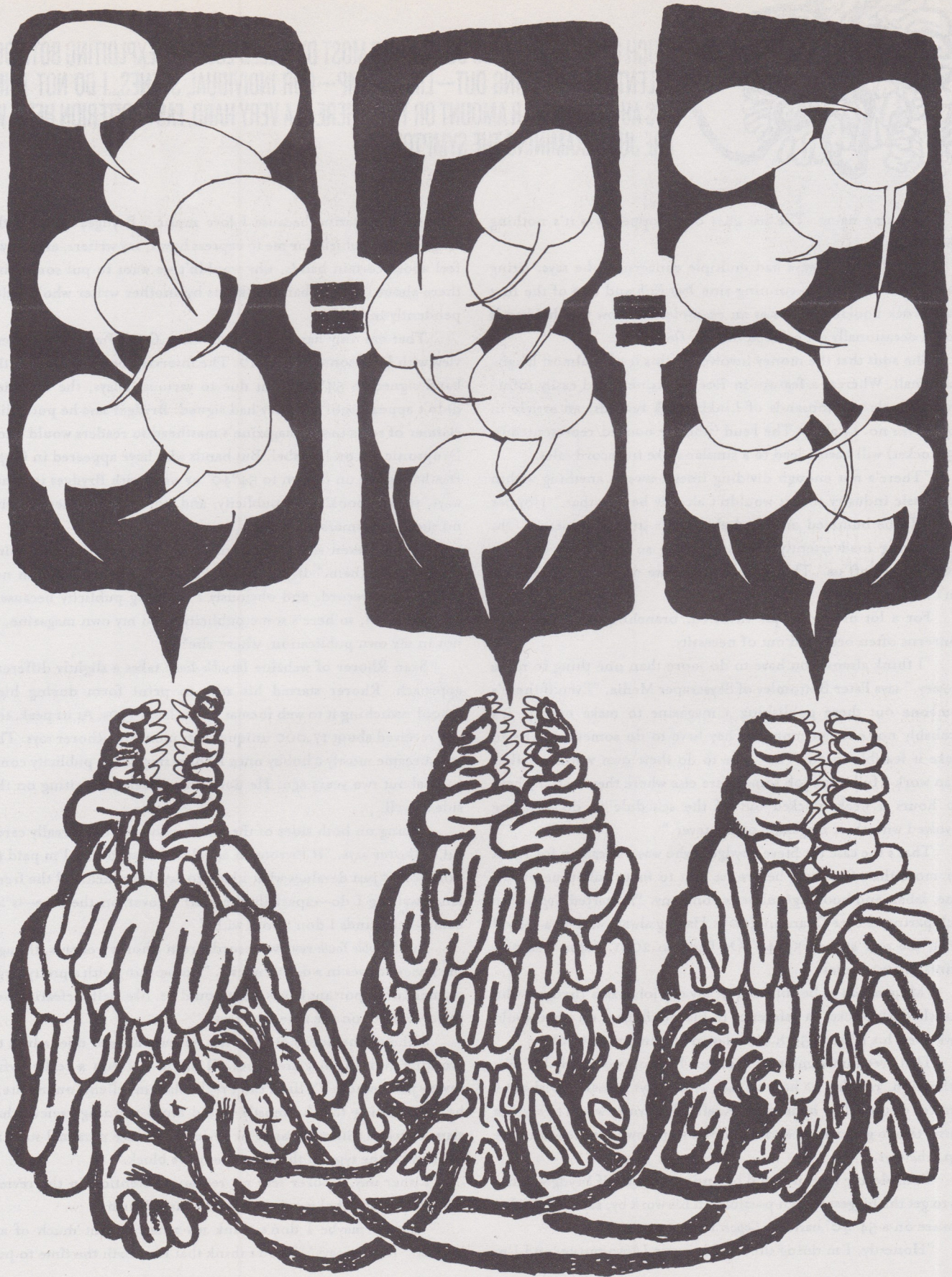
What isn't mentioned is that *AMP* is owned by Brett Matthews,

who also owns Coldfront Records (along with Sin City Records), which released HFOS's new album and two of its predecessors. *AMP*'s record-reviews archive has similarly positive reviews of other Coldfront and Sin City bands, though HFOS was the only band on Coldfront/Sin City's roster featured in *AMP*.

Because he considers *AMP* a fanzine—albeit one with a claimed circulation of roughly 40,000—Matthews has no problem with the story.

"If it was myself who did the interview and all we talked about was the new full-length on Coldfront, I could see where that would be pretty sketchy and a misuse of our media-vehicle," he says. "But they are just one of many bands that we cared about enough to cover this month. I think what would be unfair is if a band was prohibited from being publicized by people who cared about them because of their affiliation."

It's not just in *AMP*. The age of media conglomeration has even affected small-time media enterprises in the independent-music scene: Steve Brydges, editor of *Copper Press*, also owns 54°40' Or Fight Records and booking/publicity company 43 Rocket; Ross Siegel, editor of *Law Of Inertia* magazine, runs a record label of the same name; *Punk Planet* columnist Jessica Hopper runs a well-known publicity company (which sometimes represents *Punk Planet*), publishes the zine *Hit It Or Quit It* and is a freelance writer; Peter Bottomley, who started *Skyscraper* magazine with his twin brother Andrew, runs a publicity company called Skyscraper Media; Sean Rhorer, who started *Invisible Youth* zine, has a publicity company by





MUCH OF WHAT ALL OF US DO IS, AT ITS MOST DISTILLED ESSENCE, EXPLOITING BOTH OUR TALENTS FOR TURNING OUT—LIKE A PIMP—OUR INDIVIDUAL SCENES...I DO NOT THINK IT'S ABOUT A DOLLAR AMOUNT OR THAT THERE IS A VERY HARD, FAST CRITERION HERE. WE ARE JUST EXAMINING THE SYMPTOMS.

the same name. The list goes on. Hopper says it's nothing new.

"People have always had multiple concerns," she says, citing Peter Davis from long-running zine *Your Flesh* and one of the first punk-rock booking agents as an example. "I know that his bands would occasionally get covered in [*Your Flesh*]."

She adds that the money involved at this level is almost laughably small. Whereas a feature in *Time* magazine could easily influence the sale of thousands of Linkin Park records, an article in *Copper Press* no. 14 about The Feud (who are booked/represented by 43 Rocket) will hardly lead to a similar spike in record sales.

"There's not enough dividing lines between anything within the music industry that it wouldn't already be like that," Hopper says. "To be bummed or pissed about this stuff is so petty. 'Oh, we're being inadvertently sold something so somebody else can make money off us.' There's not a thing we do all day where that isn't happening."

For a lot of the people involved, branching out into other concerns often occurred out of necessity.

"I think almost you have to do more than one thing to make money," says Peter Bottomley of Skyscraper Media. "Even if there's someone out there publishing a magazine to make money, it's probably not enough money. They have to do something else to make it feasible to do. They have to do their own venture rather than work a full-time job somewhere else where they basically have 40 hours a week blocked out of the schedule to do anything involved with their magazine or whatever."

That's the case for Steve Brydges, who was a salesman for Kraft for more than five years before he quit to focus full-time on his zine, label, and booking/publicity company. He started *Copper Press* with partner Royce Deans in 2000. Having always wanted a record label, the pair started 54°40' Or Fight in 2001. *Copper Press* now prints 4,000 copies.

"My goal was to be able to quit my day job," says Brydges, who launched 43 Rocket (a reference to his late father) on what would have been his father's 59th birthday in November of 2002.

That freedom came with a price: He now works, by his own estimation, roughly 10 hours a day, seven days a week, for about a quarter of the salary he made at Kraft. "If anyone wants to say I'm doing this to get rich, I certainly took a step down on the way to the top," he says.

Considering that, it would be understandable if Brydges wanted to get the biggest return possible on his work by, say, doing a big feature on a 54°40' band in *Copper Press*.

"Honestly, I'm doing the label because I love music, and I'm

doing the magazine because I love music," Brydges says. "If the magazine is a vehicle for me to express how I, my writers, and Royce feel about certain bands, why wouldn't we want to put something there about [54°40' band] 31knots by another writer who's independently into it?"

That has only happened once, when *Copper Press* ran an interview with Dropsonic in issue 10. The interview occurred before the band signed to 54°40', but due to various delays, the interview didn't appear until *after* they had signed. Brydges says he put a disclaimer of sorts in the magazine's masthead so readers would know Dropsonic was on his label. But bands who have appeared in *Copper Press* have gone on to sign to 54°40' or work with Brydges in other ways, such as booking or publicity, and stories about them receive no such disclaimers.

"I don't even see it as a conflict of interest when I'm doing publicity for them," Brydges says. "It's different because I'm not selling their record, and obviously I'm doing publicity because I like this band, so here's some publicity from my own magazine. If not in my own publication, where else?"

Sean Rhorer of webzine *Invisible Youth* takes a slightly different approach. Rhorer started his zine in print form during high school, switching it to web format in the late 1990s. At its peak, the site received about 17,000 unique visits monthly, Rhorer says. The zine became mostly a hobby once Rhorer started his publicity company about two years ago. He does some freelance writing on the side as well.

"Being on both sides of the fence, you have to be really careful," Rhorer says. "If I wrote an article on a band that I'm paid to work for, it just devalues what I have to say that much. All the freelance writing I do—especially the stuff I cover on the zine—is all completely bands I don't work with."

But *Invisible Youth* reviews records from Rhorer's clients, though the reviewer lives in a different city. "I'm working with a pretty large segment of important labels, so it would be, like, self-defeating not to cover them on the zine," he says.

Although he does not write the reviews, Rhorer does admit to avoiding running negative ones. "I might not run a really awful review just because it's like I can't really slam my clients on my site," he says, adding that he mostly would avoid running reviews that slam a record without reason or reviews that take personal stabs at the bands—the type of thing most editors block.

Either way, Rhorer sees no reason to mention in the review that the band's label is represented by his PR firm.

"I guess maybe I don't think my zine has that much of an impact," Rhorer says. "I don't think that it's worth the time to put

in that many disclaimers because it's like maybe my zine will generate a couple of sales or discourage a couple of people from buying it, but I don't think I'm on the scope of potentially selling millions of copies of records."

It's a situation Ross Siegel of *Law Of Inertia* avoids altogether. Siegel started the magazine at age 20 after having his writing rejected by his college newspaper. The bimonthly magazine now has a claimed circulation of more than 60,000. The record label started not long after the zine, but Siegel says they stay separate.

"We absolutely, under no circumstances, don't review our own records," he says. "How fucking tasteless! I don't mean to name names, but every single magazine with a record label does that: They review their own stuff. It's one thing if the main guy who does it is reviewing it—I'm throwing your magazine out in the trash. It's another thing if someone other than the guy, who's obviously a friend of his, reviews it. What's he going to say? 'This record sucks'?"

With a couple of exceptions, Siegel says, *Law Of Inertia* never covers its own bands. (The magazine mentioned Alli With An I in passing in one story and did a small feature on The Scaries once.)

"There's two reasons we don't," Siegel says. "One, it's totally tacky. I don't want my magazine to be a front for my record label and pitch my cheesy wares on people that'd rather read about bands that are really bigger. And second, our bands aren't that big."

Siegel and his managing editor, Aaron Lefkove, met while doing publicity for Triple Crown Records. Lefkove was still working at Triple Crown when *Law Of Inertia* ran a cover story on Triple Crown band Brand New last fall.

"We didn't do it because of [Lefkove]," Siegel says. "We did it because we fucking love Brand New. And let's be honest: if we put, you know, Lamb Of God, who we also love and who were in the same issue, on the cover, it won't sell as well as if we put Brand New on it." (*Alternative Press* ran a Brand New cover story in December.)

Siegel adds that *Deja Entendu*, the band's most recent record, was essentially bankrolled by a different label, Razor And Tie, so the Triple Crown connection was pretty minimal. "We really got nothing out of it," Siegel says. "It's not like Triple Crown took out our back cover."

The Bottomley brothers' *Skyscraper* doesn't put bands on the cover, period. Although Peter sends his brother records from his clients, Andrew takes care of assigning editorial. "But I honestly do not even follow up with Andrew about what I send him," Peter says.

The twin brothers' similar musical tastes mean that *Skyscraper* Media bands will sometimes be featured in *Skyscraper*, but Peter insists it's not because of his involvement.

"If people are thinking that this band *Skyscraper* Media is handling is getting featured in *Skyscraper* magazine because of that, it's a false assumption," Peter says.

It's one his PR clients will occasionally make, he says.

"Sometimes it is a little frustrating when someone makes an offhand comment like 'You feature a lot of stuff that *Skyscraper* Media does' or if a client comes to me and is really pushy about 'So it's going to be in *Skyscraper*?' " Peter says. "They say it kind of jokingly, but yeah, I don't think most people understand the division."

The perception of a porous line dividing *Skyscraper* Media

and *Skyscraper* magazine is understandable considering the punk scene can see conspiracy in anything. Jessica Hopper, though, sees little need for the concern.

"Who fucking cares?" Hopper says. "If we're going to pretend like there's conflict of interests that exists, we're all going to get shut down, not just people who do PR and magazines."

Hopper avoids pitching freelance stories on bands she works with, though she says she'll write about "anything" in *Hit It Or Quit It*, which she publishes 2,000 copies of once a year.

"When I worked with the Dismemberment Plan, I put them on the cover because I genuinely felt they were the most important band happening and did a good story on them," Hopper says. "If someone were like, 'She put The Dismemberment Plan on that!' I'd be like, dude, that's the smallest cover of any magazine they've been on. Have a real concern. To quote Fugazi, I don't need people quoting moral ABCs to me."

The debate, she adds, really misses the point.

"Much of what all of us do is, at its most distilled essence, exploiting both our talents for turning out—like a pimp—our individual scenes," Hopper says. "I do not think it's about a dollar amount or that there is a very hard, fast criterion here. We are just examining the symptoms; we are not actually addressing the roots."

The root, in Hopper's eyes, is capitalism, which allows commerce to affect art and music. If there's money to be made, distinctions among media entities will blur. With more people multitasking now, the independent community is replicating the mainstream world's conglomerates on a much smaller scale.

Rhorer agrees, but says the analogy only goes so far. "Yes, the independent world has become very mimicking of the corporate world," he says. "But at the same time I think the majority of people involved have the heart of growing up as punk-rock kids and are not going to be coming at it with the same money-hungry, vicious attitude of the corporate world."

But does that matter if the methods are the same? If critics denigrate *Time* magazine as a pawn of corporate synergy for its feel-good story on Linkin Park, how is that different from *AMP* outright telling people to buy a record released by a label owned by the same people?

"I think it's totally worth keeping your eye on it, as a lot of people might take a different approach to it than *AMP* has," Matthews says, adding that stories in the magazine are all pitched by writers, never assigned. "A lot of other people might be pushing their own agenda with their medium, whether it be to appease advertisers or push their own interests."

It's a common refrain among indie publishers: Their magazine doesn't do that kind of thing, but they know plenty of others that do. As more people multi-task so they can make a living working in the scene they love, the lines separating art and commerce will only continue to blur—and no one's quite sure what to do about it.

"I can see where people can be concerned about that, and I have spent quite a bit of time being concerned about it," Brydges says. "I don't just publish articles on my bands without considering it. I don't want you to think that I'm not taking all of this into consideration. I just don't have the strongest conclusions." ©

You can grumble all you want about the sludgy East River, barren factories, and overflowing trash dumps—after all New York City has never been an environmentalist's dream—but stop and scratch below the filth and you'll see that little green buds are beginning to sprout through the cracks in the city's industrial skyline.

In Manhattan's Battery Park City, the Solaire, an environmentally responsible residential tower, recently sprung skyward. At 179 Rivington Street on the Lower East Side stands a high-efficiency dwelling with its own solar powered generators. Take a walk through the East Village and you'll see that community gardens have taken the place of empty lots and abandoned buildings. Heck, even Coney Island's under-construction Stillwell Avenue subway terminal is rigged with a solar array to generate 250,000 annual kilowatt hours of energy. However, if you want to find the most innovative embodiment of the green dream, you have to hop on the subway and cross over into Brooklyn.

The story begins with beer: In the 1880s, a two-story brick brewery icehouse, located in Caribbean Crown Heights, Brooklyn, "borrowed" Anheuser Brewing Company's Budweiser moniker and used it as their own. Soon after, the real Budweiser caught wind and sued, so the Brooklyn brewery changed their name to the Nassau Icehouse. The brewery thrived until Prohibition halted production for good. A series of businesses tried to make use of the space but they all failed. For the last 20 years the former brewery has been a breeding ground for pigeons, rats and mildew.

That is, until Benton Brown and his wife, Susan Boyle, were riding bikes around Brooklyn and caught a glimpse of the long forgotten Nassau—it stopped them in their tracks. Crammed between auto-body shops and warehouses lay the circa-1849 icehouse's arched windows, solid masonry and immense possibility. They knew immediately that they'd found a blank slate to etch their vision for New York City's first green-certified residential dwelling: the Nassau Icehouse Lofts.

To pull it off, the cost would be immense. Around \$100 per square foot. The six planned lofts would cost approximately \$100,000–\$250,000 each. The economics were daunting, but grants buttressed the blow. The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority chipped in \$28,000 for the 7000-watt solar energy system. Boyle and Brown became the first recipient of KeySpan Energy's Green Cinderella endowment. The program covered one-third of their "green technology" investment, about \$75,000. As for the rest, they secured home loans. The money was enough to live on during renovation, which they would oversee.

Why not? Brown, 31, is a throwback handyman, a welder who often worked construction, and a few years earlier had completed the renovations on his first factory-to-loft conversion. He was ready to give it another try. Boyle, 30, is his counterpoint—physical and otherwise. A short, slender woman with a laid-back cadence; she was a construction newbie but had an environmentalist background promoting bikes as alternative transportation. The pair combined strengths and designed their dream home.

From the get-go, this project would be different. "Utilizing the green philosophy, we wanted to make this building as environmentally sustainable as possible," Boyle says. To educate themselves, the couple attended seminars and studied environmental resource books—becoming de facto green experts.

When they were finished studying, they hired ex-employees of the building's last tenants, Monti Moving and in March, 2002, they dug into a seven-day-a-week struggle.

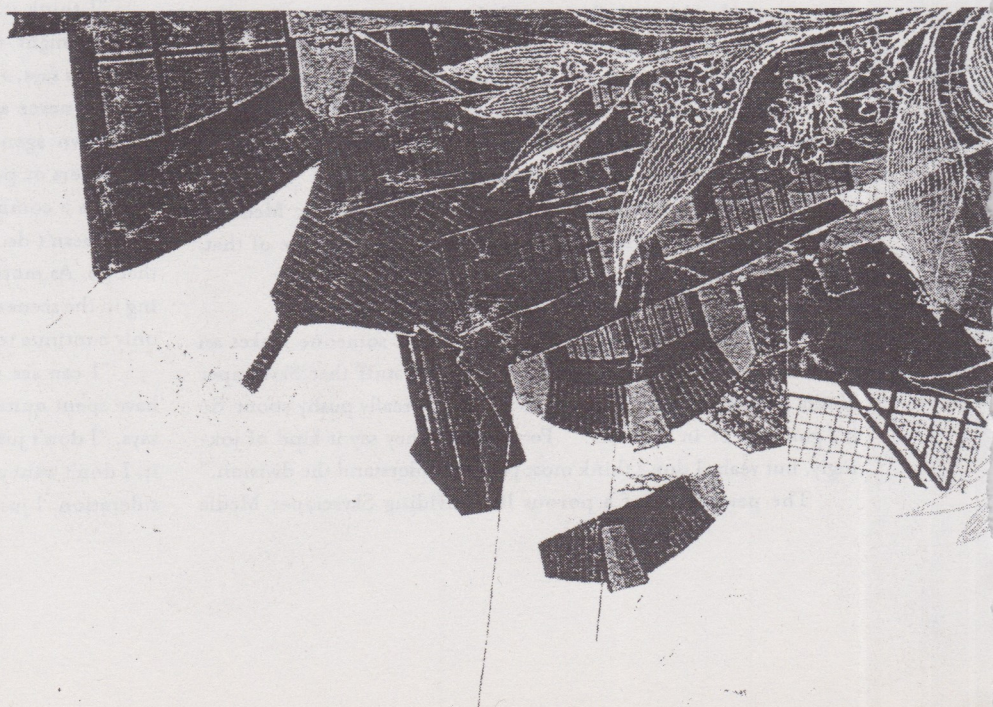
"There was a lot of trial and error," Boyle said, but several options stood out.

Because the ceilings rose 20 feet, they installed spaghetti-like radiant heating beneath the concrete floors. The water-heated tubes reach 120 degrees and, according to Boyle, provide adequate warmth. Unless you're Yao Ming, that is—the heat only rises seven feet. The only drawback to the flooring is that "it's actually hard to get used to standing on warm concrete," Boyle says with a chuckle.

The 2300 square-feet of rooftop are covered with hearty

A HUSBAND AND WIFE IN BROOKLYN TRANSFORM AN ABANDONED

By Joshua M. Bernstein



mountaintop plants. Besides adding a nice dash of green to an otherwise industrial landscape, the plants have a practical purpose: They retain storm water, filter air, and dampen summer's heat. A similar roof was installed in Chicago's city hall—one hazy summer, the roof resulted in a surface temperature reduction of 70 degrees and an air temperature reduction of 15 degrees, according to the American Society of Landscape Architects.

However, some people are hard to please. While touring the facility, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz surveyed the roof and said, "That's a great idea, but I'm not giving up my air conditioning."

Though Boyle and Brown's lofts will be air conditioning-less, they have the means to power a dozen air conditioners by creating their own electricity. Fifty-six 18-foot-long solar photovoltaic cells integrated into the roof will, on sunny days, generate seven kilowatts. This system is connected to three electric meters and should provide 50 percent of the building's energy.

On especially sunny days the system provides a special environmental treat, says Boyle. "When the dial runs backwards," he says, "it's very exciting. Energy rolls back onto the grid when we're not using it."

Innovations and extra touches abound: double-insulated, argon-filled windows; high-efficiency Munchkin-brand gas boilers to keep costs—and energy usage—low; and conservation-friendly fly ash-integrated concrete.

With everything newly in place, it's hard to imagine that before even the first solar panel was installed, several nightmares needed solving. The second floor was located halfway between window openings. This dictated ripping out the existing hardwood floors and steel beams and pouring properly-aligned concrete floors. New

floors required new stairways with which to reach them, so steel stairwells were designed and installed. A new sewer line was dug, sparking a fight with city services which insisted that the old sewer lines be excavated and capped. And the backyard—which was covered with a two-story shack-like shelter that Brown and three men demolished—revealed a cobblestone yard complete with train tracks.

"That," Brown says, "completely surprised us. We had no idea it was there."

Those impediments cleared, interior construction began. Brown and Boyle designed the bi- and single-level lofts—ranging from 1100 to 1600 square feet, their 2500-square-foot bi-level excluded—with preservation in mind. That meant leaving the exposed, ragged brick. Sliding metal bedroom doors were fabricated from existing doors. Salvaged industrial windows featured windowsills and trim hewn from the icehouse's wood beams. Kitchen cabinets were crafted from the same recovered wood.

"It probably wasn't the most cost-effective method," Brown said, "but recycling was key to the building."

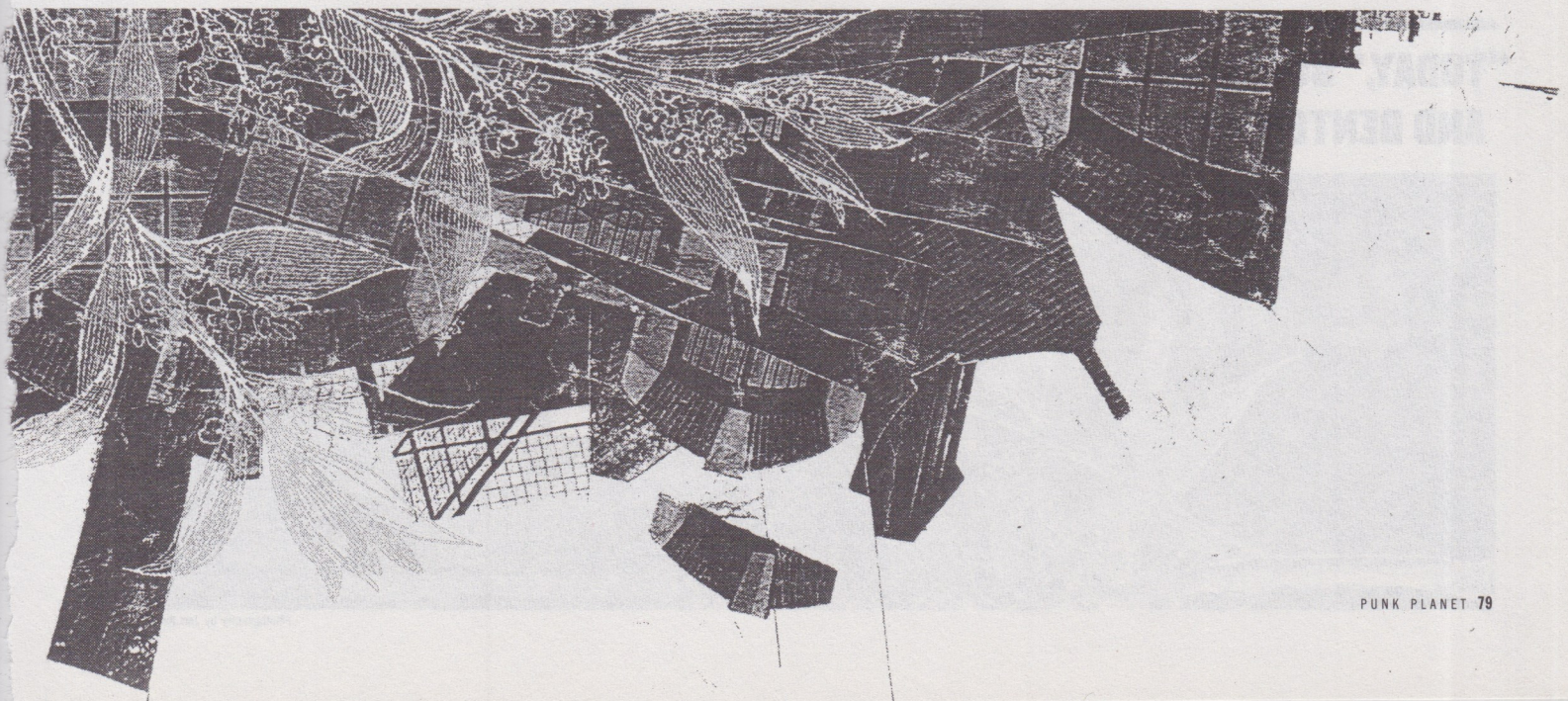
That philosophy follows all the way into the bathrooms. During renovations, the couple dealt with a local salvage collector who bought their old steel beams and in return sold them vintage cast-iron bathtubs and sinks, which smartly contrast with the freshly laid tile.

The husband and wife even tailored the building toward their creative needs. Brown's welding studio will be housed within the icehouse, and Boyle plans to build a darkroom. That is, when the building is finally occupied.

Construction delays and paperwork hassles pushed the project seven months past its deadline, but Boyle and Brown finally completed the project at the end of April. Tenants—paying market rent

GREEN DREAM

WAREHOUSE INTO NEW YORK'S FIRST GREEN-CERTIFIED BUILDING



of \$1.25-\$1.50 per square foot—will move in soon after.

"We're providing a good quality of life," Boyle said. "We have good light, good amenities and, most importantly, lots of space." In New York City, a town famous for teacup-sized apartments, this is no small draw.

Already, interest in the building is buzzing. One loft is rented. And, judging by response during a tour, other renters should flock.

Ten years ago, this would have been unheard of. The last several decades have been unkind to Crown Heights. Race riots, drug dealing, and abandoned buildings were common sights. Storefronts went vacant, and the neighborhood's reputation for danger was well founded. Hence, the project's enthusiastic embrace by the surrounding community.

Local auto body workers and neighbors have followed the project closely, Boyle says. They constantly inquire about updates, and Boyle and Brown appease curiosity with tours. "The [neighborhood] has been very accepting and supportive," Boyle says.

In the words of Letitia James, New York City Council representative, "These people are at the forefront of revitalizing Crown Heights."

They are also realizing New York City's first green-certified residential building—they hope. The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification process is arduous. LEED is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing

high-performance, sustainable buildings. Its guidelines are stiff. To receive certification, a building must accrue a set number of environmental "points." Storm-water management, proximity to mass transportation, and creating renewable energy, for example, net points. A comprehensive application (including photos, construction documentation, floor plans, LEED checklists, etc.) is submitted to LEED, which reviews the request.

"It's going to take us months to sift through the paperwork," Boyle says. The payoff will be worth it, however—green certification means new grants.

Grants are not the only awards Susan and Benton have received either. On April 7 ribbon-cutting at the Icehouse Lofts, Borough President Markowitz unfurled an unusual proclamation: "Today," he said, "I decree to be Susan Boyle and Benton Brown Day . . . Together, we can paint this town green."

The couple accepted their awards with sheepish smiles of people not accustomed to the spotlight. For two years they've toiled countless seven-day weeks. Work has been hard, and it's not over yet.

When the couple bought the icehouse, they also received the brewery itself—another daunting brick structure in disrepair. The building, bearing faded ads for Heinz Ketchup, is connected via the backyard—and underground brick tunnels—to the icehouse. The structure sits idle, but it has potential. Boyle and Brown have dreamed up a few ideas, but for now their plan is simple:

"We're going to take a well deserved break," Boyle said. ©

Glossary of Green Terms

Fly Ash—Burnt coal that is added to cement mixture to help retain heat. It is the fine particulate matter entrained in the flue gases of a combustion power plant

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)—a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings

NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) — Agency designed to help energy companies for renewable technologies

Photovoltaic Cells—Sometimes called solar panels, PV, or solar electric systems, these cells can be a cost-effective way to power homes or small businesses. Photovoltaics are semiconductor devices that convert sunlight into direct current electricity

Radiant Floor Heat—Radiant floors circulate warm water through PEX tubing embedded in the floor. The heat radiates up through the floor, warming the people, furnishings, and air in the room

Therms—Commercial unit of heat energy. The therm is equal to 100,000 BTU. It is equal to about 29.3 kilowatt hours of electrical energy. One therm can also be provided by about 96.7 cubic feet of natural gas

"TODAY," BOROUGH PRES. MARKOWITZ SAID, "I DECREE TO BE SUSAN BOYLE AND BENTON BROWN DAY ... TOGETHER, WE CAN PAINT THIS TOWN GREEN."



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PANIC Virginia Beach

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VIVA LA VINYL Bellingham
13TH AVENUE MUSIC Longview
PHANTOM CITY RECORDS Olympia
FALLOUT RECORDS Seattle
LEFT BANK BOOKS Seattle
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THE OLIVE

On the Road

Thursday We left this morning from Amman via cab, another cab, a bus, yet another cab, and arrived in Jerusalem about 1500 hours. In between these rides we spent three to four hours standing with our luggage at the King Hussein/Allenby Bridge border between Jordan and the West Bank. Our luggage was X-rayed and inspected on the outside. The luggage of the many Palestinians traveling the same route was X-rayed, opened, and searched. The Israeli inspectors were on a work slowdown for higher wages so they were letting people through one by one. It was a hot day. The air was still and the people were too hot to move a muscle. There were flies everywhere. They were leap-frogging in spastic circles around our heads and brushing our arms. They were getting into everything, and there were too many of them to wave them away. There were no lines so everyone was pushing luggage carts as close to the next one as possible. We were squeezed from six lanes to one. Remarkably, there were only a few arguments.

We had tiny taste of what it might be like for a Palestinian resident of Ramallah to do a little traveling. We had to go to Jerusalem to get our luggage. So, we took a taxi to a "checkpoint"—I can't help the fact that the word still makes me think of Berlin. We were on a dusty rubble-strewn area where the Israelis have set up concrete stanchions and a little boardwalk to completely block what used to be a major road. One can either take a long, long time to go through this via auto, or one can, as we did, get out of the taxi on one side, walk through the concrete stanchions one by one—they are narrow—show your passport to young male and female soldiers, and pass through. What a hassle. It is hot, dusty, crowded with men, women, and children who have to go from one side to the other to get to places like school.

There are buses, cars, trucks, taxis, taxis, and more taxis. People shouting. The young Israeli soldier girl glanced at my passport, and gestured me on. No eye contact, a contemptuous mumble with a tone that said, "I don't have to let you through here. I could stop you, search your stuff, search you, and, most importantly, not let you go through". I wanted to slap her. There are residents in Ramallah who have not been permitted to leave Ramallah for years. We did it; we then got into another taxi on the other side,

went to the hostel, got our luggage, then had to repeat the process all over again to get back to Ramallah. It took about three hours to do what is probably a 20-minute ride.

My uncle David lives by the old adage "You don't know a man until you've walked a mile in his shoes." He's got this way about him, this compassionate curiosity that always puts people at ease. He's warm, generous, and easy with a smile. His girlfriend, Elizabeth, is a feisty Jersey girl who's always up for a new adventure. In a family full of organizers, social workers, and protestors, David has always been the most radical. Even in some of the most left-leaning Jewish families, questioning Zionism, Israeli politics, or even just sympathizing with starving Palestinians, can be leave you open to accusations of self-hatred or even anti-Semitism. So when David and Elizabeth said they were on their way to the West Bank to pick olives for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), I knew they'd have an amazing story to tell.

They told me their story in a series of e-mails and interviews, excerpts of which are re-printed here.

What do you think influenced your interest in undertaking this effort?

David: Oh, well, you know me. I have spent all my life thinking about the Middle East—first as a member of a labor Zionist youth group, then as a volunteer on a collective farm (kibbutz), then, after facing the realities of the new post-1967 Israel, deciding whether I was a Jew or a communist and finally coming down on the side of the struggle. I gradually came around to where I am now, making frequent trips over there.

What is the significance of picking olives?

David: Olives are a way of life in Palestine—a means of economic support for the people and for the support movement. All support groups—even the Rabbis for Human Rights, which is not a Palestinian support group—

PICKERS

by Ben Tanzer

raise money by selling Palestinian olive oil. Also, it offers something productive to do and a way to meet families for most of the day.

Elizabeth: While there is a symbolic meaning attached to the olive branch, this is actually a very practical way to help these farmers by having international citizens in the area of many previous human rights violations by the Israelis against the Palestinian farmers. The internationals are witnesses of these behaviors.

In the Blink of an Eye

Thursday Immediately after we arrived in Jaiyyous, we were asked if we would like to see the olive harvest and the wall. Elizabeth stopped to help a family harvest its olives, but Roy and I joined about 12 other internationals to watch a confrontation at the gate.

The wall in Jaiyyous is a large, four-foot-tall hump topped by a fence. The wall is quite wide—actually there is a two-lane road on the wall for jeep patrol, and on one side of the wall is a tall fence. The wall cuts through land that was considered Palestinian before 1967, so now they have to pass through a gate patrolled by Israeli soldiers in order to tend their land on the other side of the wall.

When we arrive, the gate had been closed for days, and the ISM had called a demonstration to open the gate and allow the farmers to harvest their fields. At 6:30 a.m. a Palestinian farmer broke the lock on the gate and allowed some Palestinians and internationals to go ahead with harvesting. By three in the afternoon when Roy and I got there, there was a confrontation with about 20 Palestinians and their crop on one side of the wall, about 20 internationals on the other side of the wall, one jeep and three soldiers.

There was a confrontation. It began when a small boy irritat-

ed one of the soldiers, and then a Palestinian adult got into a confrontation with the soldier. Before you knew it, the soldier fired a shot in the air, and this set off the chain of events that followed.


The soldier who fired the shot was nervously pacing, while the Palestinian side was in an uproar. The soldiers handcuffed one man, and then another. Helicopters circled the area, and two other jeeps arrived. A military order was read demanding that the internationals disperse, and the gate was opened. The Palestinians, except for the two arrested men, poured through the gate. When the Palestinians were out of the way, the Israeli soldiers demanded that the internationals disperse in 60 seconds, and then grabbed two of the internationals in front.

This set off a wave of confusion. More farmers and internationals appeared on the far side of the fence, and more villagers and internationals appeared on the Jaiyyous side of the fence. Then, tear gas canisters were fired. Roy and I were only about 30 feet away from the events but the wind went up the hill. We both got a small dose of tear gas, but those up the hill were more strongly affected. The soldiers moved up the hill, but were encumbered by the internationals. The Palestinian boys were fleet of foot, but the internationals stumbled to get away, and some linked arms to prevent the soldiers from advancing.

The role of the soldiers is very difficult. Some of them are clearly hot-headed and some want to calm the situation. All the arrestees were blindfolded, and the Palestinians were forced to kneel on the ground, a rifle was pointed at their head. Some soldiers were laughing when they crossed over to the Jaiyyous side of the gate, but others were not having a good time at all. I was back because I had been tear-gassed, but Elizabeth was up front and helping an international named Helena who was blocking a soldier. I lost track of her and told one of the soldiers that I was worried about my wife. He walked me up to another soldier and told me to go forward, where I found her. The worry melted away, but then I realized I felt really sick.

How do you feel about the security wall the Israelis are building?

David: Do the walls provide security? It is a raging bull, rattling in a cage. If you want to enrage a population, build a wall around them, and employ



THE PEOPLE HAVE A PROFOUND ATTACHMENT TO THE LAND ON WHICH THEY WERE BORN ... THE OWNERS OF THE OLIVE GROVES IN JAYYOUS WERE USUALLY PEOPLE WHOSE FAMILIES HAD OWNED THESE GROVES FOR CENTURIES. THE OWNERS OF THE TREES SEEMED TO ME TO KNOW EACH TREE WELL.

an extensive, heavily armed bureaucracy to restrict their movement and economic activities. ¶ Interestingly, the Labor Party was the first to suggest a wall around the West Bank. Mitzna, who was a very principled man and a presidential candidate against Sharon, saw a wall on the 1967 borders as a means of disengaging—that is, if the Palestinians and Israelis could not arrive at some compromise, then at least the Israelis might disengage with a symbol of safety. ¶ The wall they are building now is not on the 1967 borders. There is very restricted travel for community residents across the gates from the wall. In Jayyous, the wall places two-thirds of the community's land on the Israeli side of the wall. In Qalquilya the wall encircles the entire community, thus cutting it off from outside commerce—students cannot attend college, people cannot go to work. ¶ Suppose they built a wall around Berkeley—you could imagine the chaos that would ensue. Those who worked in San Francisco and went to school or shopped in Oakland would have to cross the gates that were open for three 20-minute periods during the day at best. Suppose people wanted to go to school in Berkeley or see a movie, that would kill the movie business in Berkeley. The current wall is a land grab, but it is also a fantastic economic burden on communities. I am actually very sad that Mitzna proposed it, although he saw it operating differently—that is, it would not separate parts of Palestine from each other.

The Anatomy of an Olive Harvest

Monday Olive picking is essentially a really delightful way to spend a day—you just have to get out of the sun from noon until about 1300. We were a group of nine most of the time. Some people stand on ladders and pick, some climb the tree and pick, others stand on the ground and pick. Some farmers beat the branches with a stick to shake or knock them off the tree. There's some controversy over this technique—some feel that it isn't right to hit something that gives you so much—but today we were in the whacking school so people walked around hitting the tree branches and the olives fell to the ground. Later, everyone sits or stoops or crawls around picking up the olives.

The olives are either a beautiful purple or green or a combination of both. They also can be sort of lavender or sort of blue. They look like what you would get if you mixed a green grape with a blueberry.

We had to stop this activity very quickly at about 1600 this afternoon when we received a telephone call that soldiers were walking around in town and had arrested the mayor and a 15-year-old boy who was riding his bicycle in town. We all packed up as fast as we could and returned to town. No one knows why either one was arrested. All four of us went to the south gate and when a jeep

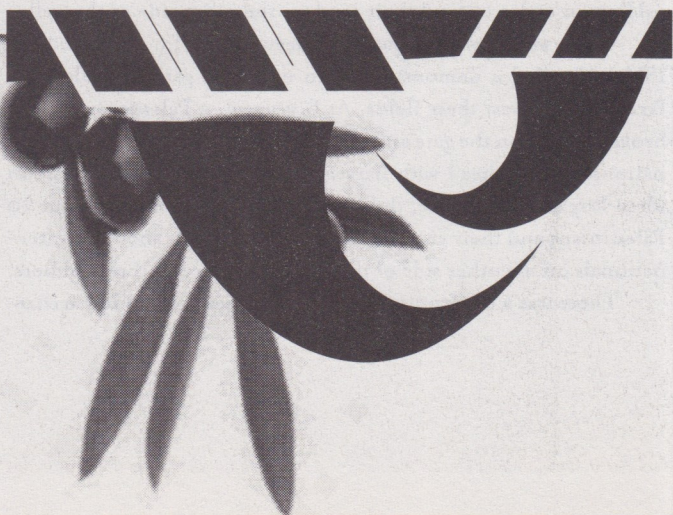
went by we hailed it and asked why and where the boy had been taken. The soldiers—just boys and girls—were courteous to us, as we were to them, but did not tell us much.

Later the soldiers came through and made every farmer who was on their land on the Israeli side of the gate leave their land and come into town. Since it was getting dark by then it was reported that they shot up light flares to show them the farmers hiding in the fields and made them leave at gunpoint. When this has happened in the past it has meant that the land now will be Israeli land.

As you met and talked to people during your travels what do you find the Palestinian and Israeli response to the current uprising to be?

David: The Palestinian response is very mixed, and so is the Israeli response. Many Palestinians have effectively been bankrupted by this experience—these were wealthy areas with well-educated parents and children and within two years they have seen their family prospects go to near zero. People have sold off land on “the other side of the wall” for near zero. ¶ Many Israelis are saddened by these events as well. Ta'ayyush on the left and the Rabbis for Human Rights in the center-left have taken militant positions against the wall, demonstrating on behalf of the Palestinians and their economy. Gush Shalom, the Peace Bloc that works with the ISM, has also taken a principled position. ¶ But many other Israelis are pleased with what is going on or close their eyes to the suffering. And, of course, those Palestinian groups that want to continue and exacerbate the conflict are strengthened by these events. There can be no compromise with the status quo, and so anyone opposed to the center-left is politically helped by these events.

Elizabeth: The Palestinians I met were circumspect in language but I understood them to support the uprising completely. One person said that the Palestinians will never leave. The people have a profound attachment to the land on which they were born. I can only speak for the inhabitants of Jayyous with regard to this issue, but the owners of the olive groves in Jayyous were usually people whose families had owned these groves for centuries. The owners of the trees seemed to me to know each tree well. ©



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We had to stop this activity very quickly at about 1600 this afternoon when we received a telephone call that soldiers were walking around in town and had arrested the mayor and a 15-year-old boy who was riding his bicycle in town. We all packed up as fast as we could and returned to town. No one knows why either one was arrested. All four of us went to the south gate and when a jeep

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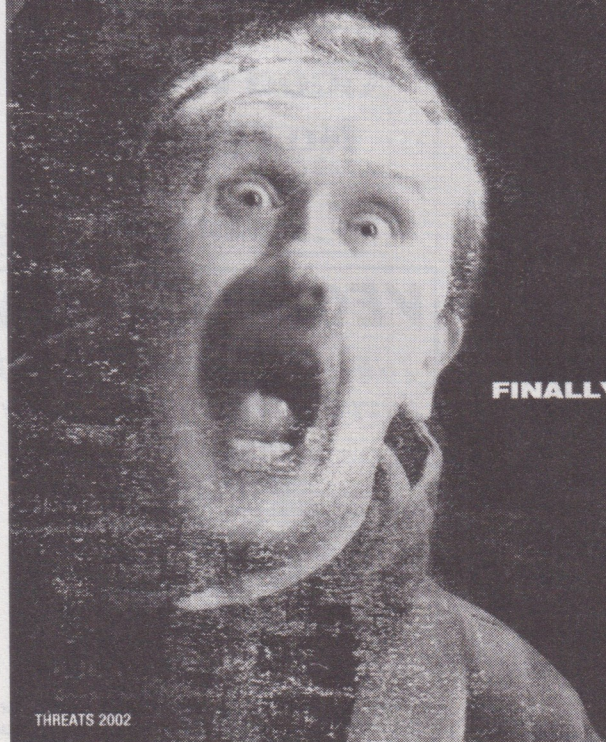
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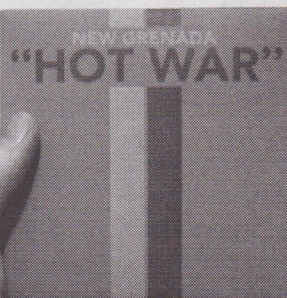
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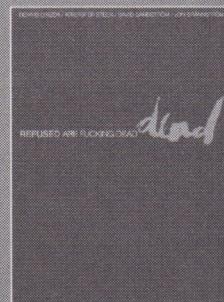


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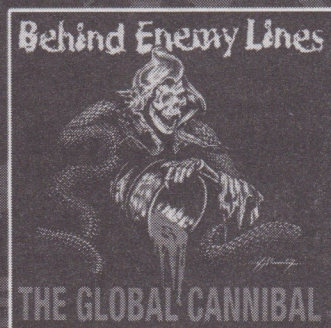
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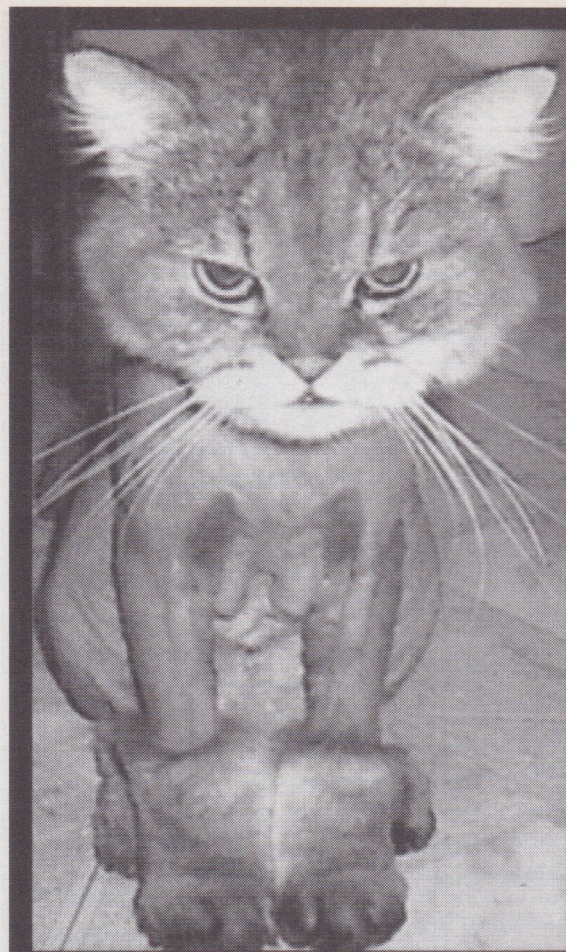
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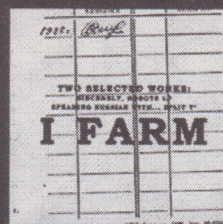
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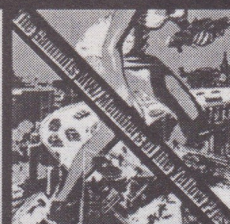
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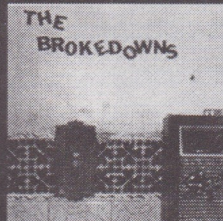
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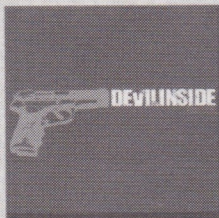
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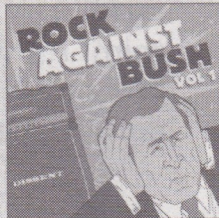
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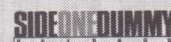
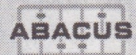
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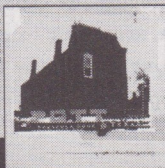
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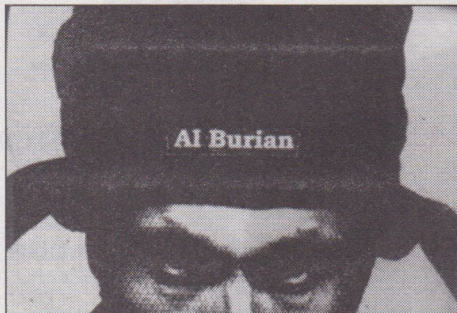
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columns PP62

al burian
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On March 16, 2004, I awake early, put on pants, drink some coffee and pre-

pare to perform my civic duty as an American national, and I'm not talking about submitting an application to join the cast of *The Real World* (that civic duty already checked off the list, mid-March 1999). Today is the Illinois primary election. Out of a household of four politically aware, left-leaning white males, I am the only one who will bother to vote in it. My subversive political fanzine-publishing roommate is not even aware that the primary is happening, but wastes no time making fun of me for bothering when I tell him why I'm up so early. "Kerry's going to get the nomination," he sulks, "Who cares? I'll vote for the lesser evil when the day comes, but I'm not leaving the house today."

This is a typical fallacy of the impatient Left, to be wrapped up in the aerial view, the three-ring circus presidential spectacle, and thus feel like anything but the most begrudging electoral participation is tantamount to calling a 900 number and casting your vote for which guest should be force-fed a sock on Montel Williams. But democracy, as Jello Biafra often points out, is not about the big picture; it's about the small shifts in power, down here on the ground level. "What's important is to vote for judges," I explain. "Chances are, I will never be face to face with the President, or for that matter a senator or even a congressman. But a judge? Look at my face, man. I've got mothering instinct written all over me. When I get hauled into court, I want a woman judge!" As per my usual routine, I am planning to practice the "if they give you lined paper, write the other way" theory of voting. Rather than informing myself about the issues and meticulously studying the candidates' platforms, I prefer to vote from the heart, according to my most utopian dreams, not mundane fears about gradations in shade of evil. When I lived in Oregon, I had the pleasure of voting

a straight Socialist ticket during the 1992 elections, and even got to vote for my old friend Chris Phelps as a US senate candidate (last time I saw Phelps was at a young communist meeting in Detroit—he was drunk and screaming, "Can you imagine what the Middle Ages must have SMELLED like?"). At other times, I've enjoyed voting only for women. It might seem too biologically determinist to assert that if the gender ratio were reversed and all branches of government staffed 98 percent by women, the women would do a better job of running things—but who knows? How are we going to find out if we don't try it?

This election, I'm particularly excited about Republican Senatorial candidate Chirinjeev Kathuria, a Sikh Muslim whose main congruence with the sitting President's political platform is his obsession with "making space travel more accessible to the average citizen." Despite zip political experience, Kathuria proclaims himself, "the most qualified person (for) the US Senate," though he himself admits to his main political liability: "turban and beard." In fact, despite US citizenship, a business degree from Stanford and affiliation with the Republican party, his website is still daily bombarded with geniuses hyperventilating about "Osama Bin Laden running for Senate in Illinois." Prominent Illinois Republicans have also expressed incredulity at a turban-wearing Sikh leading the party, and, while it is doubtful that these politicians will one day be seen, from the vantage point of the multi-ethnic, religiously harmonious Mars colonies of 2520, as the twenty-first centuries' equivalent of southern anti-abolitionists, who knows for sure?

Things change in small and incremental ways. Up North Avenue, towards Western, and my old apartment, under which address I'm still registered to vote. I haven't gotten too far in the three and a half years I've lived in Chicago—I'm still a bike ride from every place I've ever lived, and I still have the same tenuous job I got my first week in town. Myopic books has moved up the street a few blocks; a shoe store has closed and a Starbucks coffee has opened on the corner. Tony Lazzara tells me that this corner, North and Damen, used to be really scary, even 10 years ago. "When I was a kid, this was the only corner where my dad would hold me by the back of the neck," he says. "It was like he was scared that someone was just going to run up and grab me right in front of him."

Ironically, it is precisely this corner, in fact mere blocks away from my current residence, where I would have been living, had my

application to *The Real World* gone through. Wicker Park, now better known as the set for *High Fidelity* than as a particularly dangerous intersection in the vehicular homicide capitol of the US, had, by 2000, gentrified into enough of a bohemian playground to warrant reality programming. I never watched an episode of the *The Real World: Chicago*, but I did end up participating in the show, in a weird vicarious way: like many residents of the Wicker Park area, I engaged in public protests outside the building, threw rotten fruit at the wall, was gleeful to see paintball spatter on the door, or citizens' jeering and harassing the cast in the streets. That none of this apparently ever aired on the program is a testament to the "reality" being peddled—but in any case, as a first impression of Chicago, it was inspiring. *You can gentrify this street*, the populace seemed to be saying, *but we still live nearby and it's not a long walk over here to mug you.*

Western Avenue, the straightest street in America (from a road atlas point of view), is considerably more run-down than North and Damen, but here, too, change is perceptible: the food mart that was underneath my old apartment has closed down, replaced by a left wing book store. This corner is where I first learned to accept the sound of a drive-by shooting as part of regular urban life; the left wing bookstore, thus, registers as the antithesis of the *The Real World* building. Here, amongst the off-camera wreckage of reality, are the proponents of the Fantasy World, peddlers of the highest hopes, the most uncompromising stances. Across the street is the fire station where, today, the gears of democracy are slated to churn. The left wing shop-keep stands outside his store and smiles at me as I lock my bike up. "Voting today?" he nods encouragingly. He seems a little giddy, like a Catholic on Easter, half-aware that he is watching a ritual, a simulacrum of the real, and half-aware that this is the core of his belief-system, the moment when we divide between the saved and the damned.

The fire station is depressingly empty. Volunteers, mostly elderly ladies, sit at a folding table stocked with donuts. "Donut?" a volunteer says, and then, her priorities clearly sorted, asks me for my name and voter registration card.

"Democrat or Republican?" she asks.

"Do you have any other options?" I ask.

"Non Protestant," she says. That description is closer than the

other two, but it still confuses me. "Non Protestant?" I repeat, uncertainly.

"Non Partisan," she clarifies, reading the form a little more closely. "Sorry."

"Either way, I'll take it," I say.

In the voting booth, I begin at the bottom of the ballot, working my way up from the more meaningful choices of water reclamation district commissioners and judicial subcircuits to the fantastic world of congressional, senatorial and presidential races. I am torn as to whether I should vote according to the Illinois Progressive Voters' Guide included with the *Chicago Reader* or whether I should just go for it and vote for the people with the craziest names. Fortunately, perusal of the voter guide reveals an exact one to one correlation between the two, and thus Xochitl "So-She" Flores becomes my choice for water commissioner, while Barb Burchjolla and Bonnie Berger-Neel become my delegates to the democratic national nominating convention, narrowly beating out Daniel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger.

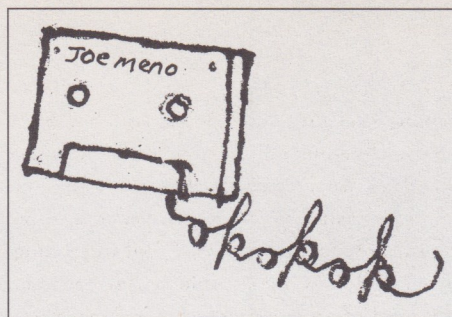
Finally, at the top of the ballot, I come to the crux of my roommate's argument, the choices (or rather, lack of reasonable ones thereof) for President of the United States, all lesser and all relatively evil. And here I am stumped. Illinois is a Midwestern state, and, while not quite as boring as Iowa, it is still generally considered culturally wonder bread enough that the citizens are allowed a few wing-nut choices, just to prove we have those choices, before we do the sensible thing, eliminate all the interesting people, and send the electoral process south. The flailing Howard Dean is still on this ballot, as are Kucinich and Clark—but who cares? Isn't a vote for any of these people, regardless of their views, a Ralph Nader vote, a statistical throw-away? Realistically, the funniest name on the presidential ballot is probably a tie between Al Sharpton and Lyndon LaRouch. The only 98 percenter is Carol Moseley Brown, but her name isn't really funny at all. Can I vote for a Carol Brown when mine eyes have seen the glory of a Xochitl Flores?

My roommate is right, I suppose; in November I'll vote pragmatically, for Anyone But Bush, as the not-too inspirational slogan says. The idea that my last presidential vote, for Nader, was irresponsible, that a two-percent showing in the polls equals an outrageous display of unconscionable idealism on the part of peo-

ple like me, is something that both the Democrats and Republicans would love me to believe. And, OK, I'll accept it, I'll accept that our backs are against the wall. The first four years of Bush Jr. make one long for the diplomacy and level-headedness of Reagan, and it is not clear that the world has room to inch another four years' closer to armageddon. In November, it will be serious, if for no other reason than that democracy itself was compromised in the shady electoral riggings of 2000, and that another victory for Bush may signal the real defeat of the principles, utopian as they may be, upon which the United States is premised. But these are the primaries. This is where we put our best foot forward, where we vote with our hearts, not the dark fears of the rational, pragmatic mind. And there's always the write-in option. If it's a white bread, presidential-sounding name you people want, I'm willing to compromise. In ballpoint, I letter the name in neatly: A-N-D-R-E B-E-N-J-A-M-I-N, aka ANDRE 3000. Depositing the ballot in the box, I take a deep breath and realize that I have never cast a more earnest vote in my life.

...

In late April, I'm going on tour with a band as part of a package tour sponsored by punkvoter, an organization founded under the "Anyone But Bush" umbrella by one Mike Burkett, aka "Fat" Mike of the band NOFX. I've met Burkett on one occasion, in 1985, behind the Turning Point, a garage-turned-venue in Carrboro, NC, and was instructed by him on that occasion in construction and usage of a beer bong. He struck me at the time as a sensible, pragmatic guy. However, being associated with punkvoter has led to some disturbing discoveries, most notably a website which seems to be the counter-point to punkvoter.com. Conservativepunk.com (the newfangled world of the virtual makes it impossible to discuss something without plugging it—one longs for the days of Tim Yohannan and his ethic at *Maximumrocknroll*: "We'll review racist bands. And if one of the numbers in the PO box gets transposed, then....") presents the viewpoint of punks who don't want to be misrepresented by the "loud and vocal minority" of rabid progressives, and features credentialed punk rockers such as Dave Smalley of All / Dag Nasty / DYS, saying things like: "After the traditional flirtation with anarchy (say, ages 16-18), and the predictable indoctrination into liberalism (say, 18-24, with my eyes starting to open in my mid-'20s), I've come to the conclusion in my '30s that Reagan was right, and Carter was wrong." Conservative punks in and of themselves are no great revelation to me; in the early '80s the Dave Smalley "anarchists" of the world were the straightedge guys who would knock a beer out of your hand at a party, or the "anti-racist skinheads" in my home town who occasionally beat up gay people. That strain has always been there, arguably at times has even predominated, in punk—but now, with punkvoter and conservativepunk.com both registering people to vote, what if more people register to vote as conservatives? Would that officially terminate punk's association with the left? Would *Punk Planet* then have to come up with a new name?



Introducing A New Contest to Save Humanity

I'm turning 30 in two weeks and I think I'm slowly forgetting the things that make me

happy. The truth is the most fun I had was listening to records with Meg and Mark the other day: some Lost Sounds, Compulsive Gamblers, some Pussy Galore that had been reissued. I have not done that shit since I was a kid; just lie there on someone's couch and hear new songs, new bands, new sounds. Why? I dunno. It seems like the older I get, the less surprised I am by things, and that includes music even. Worse than this, is the feeling that I think that I am starting to really enjoy watching TV. Like really watching, where you know what show is on when, every evening. There is something about getting older and going to a job every day and then coming home and watching television every night that is kind of scary and pathetic to me. Maybe what it is, is a bad sign; a vulgar display of more responsibility, less free time, and my own growing apathy.

Or maybe not. Maybe TV isn't as bad as all that. There have been some good TV shows, shows that have seriously changed the way I look at the world, momentous shows that, as a kid, broadened my ideas about the galaxy I lived in, mostly shows that were strange and short-lived, like *Mork and Mindy* which to this day, still seems totally indecipherable but totally entertaining, or *V* with the aliens that ate mice and had like reptile faces under their perfect human skin, or *Manimal* which I think was on Friday nights, about a private eye of some kind, who could turn into either a snake, a panther, or a hawk, to solve crimes. Like I said, I'm almost 30 and I still think about that *Manimal* show all the time. Why? Because somehow all these different shows were surprising, somehow they each in their own way, gave me a sense of the weird possibility of life; whether it was about an alien in suspenders who lived in an attic or imprisoned humans in revolt against technologically-advanced lizard people, or about a cop who could turn into a falcon, there was something in these programs that sparked my imagination, made me believe, for one moment, that the universe was indeed bigger than my neighborhood, that it was more complex and beautiful and full of a wonderful potential I just had not taken the time to see.

What it seems like now is TV is about degradation; people degrading themselves, people degrading other people, people giving up their sense of dignity and privacy for scorn and a kind of unearned fame, which in the end, is its own kind of degradation. From *American Idol* to *Fear Factor* to *The Real World* and on and on to the most useless, mean-spirited program of all time possibly, MTV's *Boiling Points*, where contestants compete to piss other people off, strangers mostly, there has been a sudden and decisive turn in television towards our most base, least admirable instincts; that is the use of power, in this case, the power of the transmitted image, to inflict discomfort, momentary pain, and lifelong embarrassment. Of course these shows are hugely popular. Of course I've seen *The Real*

World. What's most troubling isn't the shows' popularity, but their intention. People have been degrading other people in the name of entertainment for thousands of years. Given the chance, it's sad, but it seems we'll always choose degradation. There just happens to be something kind of sleazy in all our natures. What I find interesting though is how widespread and how inescapable it has become. Somehow, I doubt if this kind of entertainment has ever been less productive but more accessible and more overtly commercial, which in the end, is the television's real function anyway.

Since it's introduction in 1946, when it first became available to national consumers, television has always been product-based. It has always been about advertising; everything from program sponsorship to celebrity endorsements to the current fad of product placement. But for some reason, it seems so fucking transparent now. It seems, because of the mean-spirited nature of the contemporary trend of TV shows, and the really lack of anything imaginative in nature, that there is nothing else going on when you watch, but selling, and selling, and selling.

What it comes down to is this: it seems the fucking commercials are more human, more inventive, and more content-driven, which should be fucking alarming to somebody. Is it all a mistake? Is it true that consumers consume more when they are panicked, terrified, unsettled. Did you ever buy anything to make yourself feel better? Sure. I don't think it's some international conspiracy, but it seems like the consequence of all these mean-spirited shows is just more fucking meanness and more fucking bitterness. Somehow, it seems, we have become more and more accepting of everyday shittiness, of acting like an asshole, of just being rude in general, and so the perception that other people are crazy and intolerable and without value has become a kind of commodity. So where do you go to get away from all these crazy people? Where do you go to feel comfortable, pleasant, safe? You come home from work and take a seat in front of the TV, where by the end of the evening, all problems will be solved, all secrets revealed.

What I want to watch is a show like this: "The Girl With the Rocket Car" or "That's Jake, my Invisible Roommate!" or "A Stranger in Robot-Town." Yes, "Robot-Town." Picture a young girl, whose parents are divorced, and she must ride the bus home all alone. One evening she falls asleep on the bus and wakes up in Robot-Town, a town of all strange and wonderful robots. The girl is upset at first and the robots comfort her and as they try to find a way to get her back home, she must live among them, and learn their strange, secret, robot ways. Just think of the possibilities for the theme song alone. No, really think about it. "Robot-Town." I think this is exactly what I have been missing. OK, then, here's what I will ask of you; we are going to invent our own TV culture without using the actual TV, like conceptual art of the 1970's, we are going to have a contest:

Introducing a contest for the best "Robot-Town" theme song, with lyrics, and music, which is optional but would be awesome if you can record something. Whatever your idea is about the show, write down the words to the theme song, or sing them into

a boom box, or even better, have your band record it and the best three will be printed here with much fanfare in two issues time. Send cassettes, CD's, guitar tablature, whatever to:

*Robot Town Theme Song Contest
c/o Joe Meno
Punk Planet Magazine
4229 N. Honore
Chicago, IL 60613*

Thank you and, to all our contestants, good luck.



As a child, there was no greater thrill than being naughty. Learning to ride a bike or write in cursive seems insignificant in the long, dark shadow of me and my

brother's secret stockpile of *Playboy* magazines (unwisely stolen from our father and even more foolishly hidden under the living room couch). Oh, to be preteen again, decoding nature's sweetest message. A peek of hair, a *National Geographic* pecker, so many things sent my mind into a flurry of wonder and excitement, shame and hope. Unfortunately, it takes more than an anatomy textbook to titillate me these days. That's why I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate some truly special musicians. Daring artists who have a knack for nastiness that have kids all across the land hiding under their covers with their ears glued to a set of headphones, gladly risking punishment for the irrepressible thrill of learning about the nasty.

CLARENCE CARTER

Clarence Carter is all about fantasy. In more than one song, he boasts about his qualifications to love the ladies. They include (but are not limited to) a 16-inch dong and his ability to "touch you in places you forgot you had". I first heard him on KDIA, the now-defunct AM soul station in Oakland, with a live version of his hit, "Strokin'". I was delightfully scandalized that they could play such a filthy song on AM radio. In the culminating point of the song, Clarence explains how he can tell his woman is "sassified" by the way she calls out his name: "CLARENCECARTER! CLARENCE-CARTER!OOooOOh, shit! CLARENCE CARTER!" His freaky intent rings clear in his laugh, a mischievous, baritone, "Heh, heh, HEH!". To add further to the intriguing persona of Clarence Carter, he's blind. You know what they say, lose one sense and the other four become more pronounced. Watch out, Ray Charles.

LIL KIM

Lil Kim is the nastiest woman in show business. I would stop

short of calling her a role model for the youth, but her songs about getting paid and getting off are funny as hell. In my favorite track off of *Hardcore*, she spins a tale of a man who kept her in Chanel perfume and Gucci sheets, perfect in all ways except for the most crucial: "Something I wanted but never was pushy/the motherfucker never ate my pussy".

Lil Kim is not charitable to the horizontally challenged. "The sex was wack/ a four-stroke creep/ jumped on the dick and rode his ass to sleep/ he called the next week asking why I ain't beeped him/ I told him: I thought your ass was still sleeping".

"Dreams (of fucking an R&B dick)" is about getting freaky with a wide spectrum of R&B guys from R. Kelly to the Harlem Boys Choir. "What's up with that Prince cat?/ He be lookin' fruity, but he still could eat the booty".

I heard that Nas wrote most of her lyrics, but I could give two shits. I like to imagine Lil Kim 30 years down the road, sagging, starting to look a little rough and crazed, but still flamboyant and enticing men half her age into cunnilingus.

BLOWFLY

Make no mistake, Blowfly writes parodies that would straighten Weird Al's hair. Clark Kent to the glittering insect super hero is Clarence Reid, who worked for '70s soul label, TK Productions. The persona of Blowfly emerged during "take-five" breaks where he would keep the musicians entertained by performing filthy parodies of pop and soul hits. Everyone thought it was hilarious, so he began to put out records (12 in all). Often, the musicians backing-up Blowfly on the parodies were the same musicians who performed on the original versions of the songs.

Many of Blowfly's records were damn shitty, but the early stuff was usually funny and the album covers cannot be beat. Some of my favorite parodies include, "Bad Fuck" ("Bad Luck" by Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes) chronicling the woes of unsatisfying love. A more triumphant number is "Spread Your Cheeks" ("Swear To God" by Frankie Valley) where Blowfly espouses the joys of anal sex. "Spread your cheeks, you can do something you never did/Spread your cheeks, and don't worry about having a kid/Spread your cheeks and let me serenade your mmm-mm-mmm". Toward the end of this song, however, the lighthearted campiness is replaced by genuine disturbance as Blowfly starts to go off, "Spread your cheeks! I have some sandpaper!/ Spread your cheeks! I have a hacksaw!"

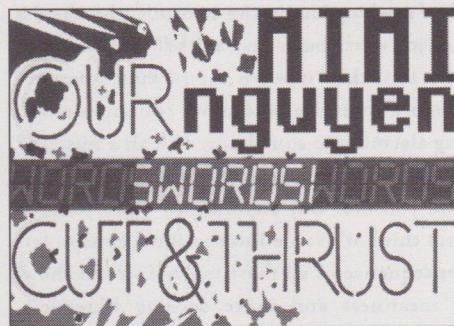
PRINCE

I'm generally distrustful of people who don't like Prince. It seems that the people who don't like Prince are cowards. They're scared of sex, scared of style, and scared of life. Besides writing some of the best pop songs of all time, he also wrote some of the dirtiest songs of all time. One of his first albums features a photo of himself buck-naked and riding a pegasus. His entire career seems to echo this sentiment.

On his *Dirty Mind* album, he has a song called, "Sister" which is

so scandalous, it makes "Kissin' Cousins" come across like a nursery rhyme. "She doesn't wear no underwear/ Says it only gets in her hair/ Honey's got a funny way of stopping the juice." Ew!

Prince is brave and he's all about truth. He was messing with gender roles long before it was hip to do so. I love that he can French kiss his guitar, or wear assless pants, or dry hump the floor and squares hate him for it. I love that he's all about sex, whether Darling Nikki is masturbating in public, Wendy and Lisa are in the bath tub together, or his date has a pocket full of used rubbers. Prince is for the underdog ("Controversy"), for seizing the day ("1999"), and, of course, for getting it on. I could never say everything there is to say about such a complicated and prolific artist, especially in so limited a space. But, in summation, I would like to say, if you don't like Prince, you are probably an asshole.



"If they treat you like garbage, put on a garbage bag. If they treat you like a bandit, black out your eyes."

—Nicky Marotta,
Times Square

Winding
through the streets

of New York City, a teenaged girl in a leather cap and a pin-covered leather jacket drags an amplifier on a luggage cart, stopping outside a disco to plug in her electric guitar. When a clubgoer tells her she's shit, she smashes the club owner's car and clashes with the police who appear to take her away. Obviously, she's the hero of this teenage rock'n'roll adventure.

Set in 1980, Times Square is a love letter to a tarnished city in transition and, in particular, two girls' romance with punk rock rebellion and each other. But while Times Square is a coming-of-age film, and uniquely (for both 1980 and now), one that features an implicit queer relationship, it is also a treatise that targets the image of a coherent social space, perpetuated in the urban discourse of revitalization, as a fantasy that harbors its own spatial politics, regulating the mobility of certain bodies through vectors of class, gender, and sexuality, including our Sleaz Sisters. Since its disappointing theatrical release, Times Square has since become a queer cult classic, with its adolescent fantasy of independence, decadence, and breathtaking girl-girl intimacy. Which isn't to say the film is without fault—continuity errors trigger magical haircuts, studio decisions hamstringing the queer quotient of the girls' relationship, and the narrative threads go slack on more than one occasion. The film's stymied potential is a source of frustration for me and, according to the commentary track by both director Alan Moyle and actor Robin Johnson (who played the amazingly tough but tender Nicky), those involved in its making. Nonetheless, Times Square is

an important archive for a downtown gone Disney, and for its portrayal of a realistic, but also mythic, girls' love story that burns with a punk rock passion. Slouching toward downtown, Times Square is, as the film's tagline suggests, about a poor girl who becomes famous, a rich girl who becomes courageous, and who together become more than friends, but it's also about much more.

Politician's daughter Pamela Pearl (given life by the wonderful Trini Alvarado) is sent to a psychiatric hospital for an unspecified nervous condition, diagnosed after she abruptly, and publicly, runs out of her father's press conference for the revitalization of Times Square. Pammy despairs of the machinations of her father's crusading campaigns, including his glib use of his daughter as an anecdotal device for his announcements of what he calls an urban "renaissance;" and she finds herself achingly powerless in the grip of the multiple contradictions underlying his suffocating appearance of civility and safety. Bereft, without purpose or passion, she floats through the film's introductory moments like the zombie she claims to be—an imperfect monster, undead and unliving—in a letter penned to late-night radio DJ Johnny LaGuardia.

At the hospital for neurological testing, Pammy shares a room with runaway Nicky Marotta, the prologue's guitar-wielding girl, who is being held for her outbursts—staged seizures, she confides, to keep her out of juvenile detention. Their initial connection is staged in a series of small encounters that serve as the foundation for their mutual fascination. The roguish Nicky eats from Pammy's get-well bouquets and burns cigarette holes into the curtained room divider; quiet but quick-thinking Pammy speaks up for Nicky during a doctor's condescending examination. Intrigued, Nicky tears a page from Pammy's diary while she sleeps. Under the tent of her antiseptic sheet, she reads, with growing, palpable wonderment, a poem Pammy's written about her: "Your ribs are my ladder, Nicky / I'm so amazed, I'm so amazed."

Positioning himself as the voice of the subterranean layers of the dark city, radio DJ Johnny LaGuardia seems to be, at first, Pammy's answer—but her true salvation comes in the form of a punk rocker with both a troubled past and a dream of becoming *more* than this. With her boom box blaring the Ramones' "I Wanna Be Sedated," Nicky lures Pammy out of the hospital with a devilish grin and a shimmy of her hips, stealing an ambulance for their wild escape through the city. In an abandoned pier on the Hudson River, the two girls craft a home for themselves, nesting with their dumpstered furniture and scavenged linens, fashioning clothes from scraps and garbage bags, throwing televisions from rooftops and dancing in the streets, in a romantic bohemia of a shared life underground. Screaming each other's names and christening themselves the Sleez Sisters, Nicky and Pammy promise to prevail against those forces conspiring to keep them apart. Sealed in blood drawn with a switchblade knife, the girls make a pact to call on one another when in need. And with all the feeling of a girl madly in love, Pammy kneels before an unsure Nicky and asserts her devotion. "Everything you do, or you say, is poetry. At least / I think so."

In staging this queer, punk rock romance in the streets of the city, *Times Square* is a film about the political and ideological character of public space, among other things. At a press conference, under a banner shouting "Reclaim Rebuild Restore," Pammy's father David Pearl asks, "The question we want to ask ourselves today, especially those of us with children, is this: do we want to live in an x-rated city?" His proposals, including the shutdown of the porn theaters (the sites for both commercial and noncommercial sexual exchanges outside of the norm), mirror those real-life developments for the gentrification of Times Square, reconceived largely as a series of attractions for incoming tourists while displacing a range of residents deemed unsightly. In particular, then, his proposals to contain the visible presence of perverts and other "x-rated" persons are challenged by his daughter's rebellious dalliance with queerness and multiple forms of public sexuality.

There's no denial that the city can be dangerous, but there's danger also lurking within the imagined security of home and hearth. David Pearl's stated goal of the preservation of "family," and the protection of the "children," is belied by his daughter's dramatic defection (as gleefully pointed out by DJ LaGuardia). Refusing this patriarchal order of protection because of its costs, including the certain death of a deadening domesticity, Pammy wryly notes that, "Out of the frying pan and into the fire is where you go when you don't want to be eaten for dinner." Escaped from under the patriarchal thumb of her father, whose touted liberalism becomes a source of hypocrisy, Pammy becomes the self-assured "foxy Miss Pearl," a founding Sleez Sister. And in a letter written to DJ Johnny LaGuardia, which he reads on-air, Pammy crafts her own declaration of independence, "Dear Daddy, I am not kidnapped. I am me-napped, I am soul-napped, I am Nicky-napped, I am happy-napped. We are having our *own* renaissance."

In an attempt to discredit their newfound underground fame, her father issues press releases insisting that Pamela is ill, requiring medication, and that Nicky is unstable, a danger to herself and others. In particular, Nicky's gender and class status as "white trash," those markers that contain and constrain her mobility through the world, code her as a criminal to Pammy's father, her sympathetic but concerned social worker, doctors and of course, law enforcement. Her status as a teenage juvenile delinquent thus makes her hyper-visible to the disciplinary apparatuses of the state, which then attempt to regulate and confine her to particular places, and practices, of surveillance and control. In response to this barrage of accusations, the girls pen the song "Sleez Sister Voodoo." Live on LaGuardia's radio show, the girls perform their proto-feminist contestation of the father's attempt at a patriarchal restoration of spatial order and social control. Draped in disgust and scorn, Pammy interrogates his vision of a "safe" public and supposedly "seamless" social cohesion, identifying his gentrification campaign instead as an excuse to deny certain social groups a right to the city at all: "You want to make Times Square as cold as your icy eye? Why do you want to punish people who aren't like you? You know, at home, I've heard you use the following words: spic, fag-

got, nigger, psycho. Well, I just want you to know, *your daughter is one.*"

Having been so thoroughly disempowered by the confines of social conventions, together these girls imagine a different world where power dynamics are transformed in their favor. Becoming the Sleaz Sisters allows the girls to imagine themselves in more enabling ways, permits them entry into another, public, world. David Pearl's plans exemplify a fear of cross-class and cross-racial contact, and imagine the city as a perilous realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual license. Of course, for the girls, this is what makes the city alluring. Here, in these fleeting moments, their implicit queerness bestows upon them an outlaw status, defying gendered and classed limitations on mobility and identity. One particular scene shows the girls happily wandering the crowded sidewalks of Times Square, dancing to boom-box tunes, holding their own against the mostly-male denizens slouched and smiling in doorways, and running, giggling, through sex stores under neon signs flashing "XXX Peep Shows" and "Live Nude Girls." Stopping under a theater marquee advertising a screening of *House of Psychotic Women*, the girls spot some graffiti on a missing persons poster, featuring a school photograph of Pammy herself, on the side of a bus: "No sense makes sense—the Sleaz Sisters."

Surprised, Nicky notes, "Somebody's taking our name."

"Maybe they want to be like us."

"Yeah, it's like destiny, man. More sleaze sisters!" Enthusiastic, Nicky pens a black bandit mask onto the photograph of the now unfamiliar stranger known as "Pamela Pearl." These brushes with imitation and adoration occur with more and more frequency, and the girls find themselves with a cult following, thanks in part to LaGuardia, who regularly airs their public statements, angst-ridden poems and angry punk songs. The Sleaz Sisters thus become the inspiration for listeners' fantasies of independence and self-theatricalization, embodying a radical alternative to prescriptive norms and imperatives about "appropriate" femininity and heteronormativity. Girls write in to the DJ, who has fashioned himself as a mouthpiece for Sleaz, Inc., urging the girls to stay strong, to never come home, to refuse to settle for an ordinary life.

On the commentary track, director Alan Moyle is bitter that the studios not only forced a sellable soundtrack onto *Times Square*, but also dampened the queer promise of the girls' relationship, removing scenes charged with erotic possibility. (Also in the original unpublished script by Jacob Brackman is a scene in which Nicky pulls down her pants to show Pammy a tiny "P" and "N" amateurishly tattooed on her abdomen, a permanent marker of their wild romance.) But in one of the film's more memorable moments, the girls' queer desire is amplified in what constitutes a public act of playing dress-up for each other's pleasure (and also suggests the queer possibilities of similar scenes in bedrooms all over). Nicky encourages the self-conscious and shy Pammy to audition as a not-topless dancer at a seedy topless bar called the Cleo Club, after all other schemes (scamming three-card monty and mugging, badly, rich businessmen) to raise cash fail. In this scene,

the erotic performance of butch-femme underlines their dynamic. (Backstage, Nicky tells a nervous Pammy, "Look, I'm brave, but you're pretty. I'm a fuckin' freak of nature!") Nicky's hair is slicked back, and she wears a men's blazer with her usual swagger; Pammy's costume, on the other hand, is a fantasy confection of chiffon and lace. The listless bar patrons, used to the regular rotation of equally listless dancers, can't be bothered to watch Pammy's inaugural turn on the runway, until Nicky's adoring devotion at the edge of the stage inspires Pammy to dance, feelingly, enthusiastically, for her girlfriend's clear delight. Under the bright lights of Nicky's affections, Pammy's transformation is striking.

But like matching puzzle pieces, the girls complement one another's strengths and vulnerabilities, and Pammy reciprocates by encouraging Nicky to claim her own (sexual) public persona. The unusually subdued Nicky hesitatingly reads a poem to Pammy on bended knee, in which she growls "I'm a damn dog"—dangerous, perhaps, but devoted. ("I can lick your face / I can bite it too / My teeth got rabies / I'm gonna give 'em to you!") Urged on by Pammy's insistence, she agrees to set the poem to a punk rock tune and perform with the Cleo Club's house band The Blondelles (who seem to be dressed, throughout the film, for a psychedelic airport lounge). Standing at the edge of the stage, Pammy acts as her greatest fan as Nicky, under the rock-star alias "Aggie Doomed," struts and crawls her way across the stage. Dressed in a ragged black satin coat with fur tails and sequined details, she aggressively stakes her territory.

In the sympathetic but also vaguely sinister role of a male impresario grooming his own guerilla girl group, DJ Johnny LaGuardia encourages their meteoric rise to subterranean infamy in order to cultivate his own place in their urban mythology. Reveling in a romantic individualism, he is blind to the considerable costs of this path. It is here that their romance, like a candle burning too brightly at both ends, begins to falter; Nicky's hopes for greater celebrity clash with Pammy's uneasy sense that they've lost track of themselves in this romance with marginality. Both girls are sympathetic in articulating their divergent takes on the issue of their cult status. Deathly afraid of falling victim to the apparatus of state surveillance and bureaucratic control threatening to swallow her whole, Nicky places faith in the public nature of celebrity: "You can't disappear if you're famous." But skeptical of Nicky's plotting to do something even wilder than dropping televisions in order, she says, to build on their "trademark," Pammy begins to reconsider a life constructed in pursuit of infamy.

After an argument with Pammy about their future together (or its lack), in a heartbreaking scene set to Patti Smith's "Pissin' in the River," a minimalist dirge about obsessive love and self-destruction, a devastated Nicky destroys their home and burns their shared journal. In front of a crooked and broken mirror, she smears black bandit make-up across her temples and eyes. Mirroring their vandalisms of the missing persons posters, this act suggests that Nicky is herself feeling disappeared, gone missing from the only life she'd found worth living. Drunk, drenched, and utterly distraught, she

staggers into the radio station, threatens the DJ ("You fuckin' little straight!"), and demands that her plaintive cries be broadcast live: "I never told you everything. I never said the stuff I should. I was going to tell you, I never thought I could. Find me! Help me! Save me! Can you hear me? Pammy, I'm calling you, Pammy!"

The climatic concert stages a utopian scenario, in which the girl who was once a fan becomes instead, or also, a star. Pammy rescues Nicky, just as she blood-pact promised she would, and steals her away to her father's office in the middle of Times Square, among the porn theaters and teeming storefronts. Calling all the local radio stations, Pammy announces an impromptu, and illegal, midnight show in Times Square. With kitchen scissors, plastic bags and black greasepaint, girls create their own versions of the Sleaz Sister uniform in response to the announcement, and board buses and subways from all over the New York City area to converge in Times Square. As I've mentioned elsewhere, while the sense of solidarity forged between the girls is mediated by commodity culture (and punk rock is no exception), it is still a *meaningful* relation. Here, the city streets, so often construed as a masculine domain, becomes the temporary staging ground for a cross-class girl gang claiming these public spaces for themselves.

In her now-signature garbage bag armor and bandit eye make-up, Nicky performs an ecstatic "Damn Dog" on the marquee roof of a Times Square theater above a milling crowd of screaming fans. But as the police approach from behind, Nicky jumps off the edge of the marquee and into a tattered blanket held taut by a group of girls—staging her own "death," her swan song, like a true rock star. Disappearing into the crowd, whose chaotic uniforms provide camouflage, she evades capture by the police. As a sadder but wiser Pammy watches her vanish into the night, this final moment resonates with a war cry Nicky screams from atop the marquee before her star performance: "They might be able to blow me away, but they can't blow all *you* away!"

In the decades following its release, the pre-Disney Times Square of the film (and the landscape of New York City in general) was subsequently, and devastatingly, transformed by the AIDS epidemic, the globalization of capital, programs of urban redevelopment and the real-estate boom, the resulting increase in homelessness and the relocation of many tenants. So whereas this climatic denouement certainly models the possibility for identification with a pop star (or punk star) to become a kind of public agency, however temporary, what it also presages, and eerily so, is the corporatizing effects of decades of redevelopment on the meanings of public space in Times Square. With this "revitalization," Times Square now made safe and secure for tourists and corporations, MTV's *Total Request Live* hijacks this scene daily. Under these changed historical circumstances and social frameworks, groups of teenage girls gather in Times Square to submit to this new form of urban surveillance, to perform themselves as devoted fans and, as the cameras turn toward them, as fleeting stars. Even more disturbing for the radical potential of queer publics is the role of middle-class gays and les-

bians as a vanguard for gentrification, transforming, and in the words of one real estate agent, "stabilizing," working-class (and often non-white) urban neighborhoods.

Times Square, then, might be a reminder of what a dangerous queer public might look like, could still look like. As Lauren Berlant argues, "The real fear we face, as scholars and activists, is not that queers in America will have sex, but that morning, noon, and night, in the streets and everywhere, queers in America will have politics." Against the more familiar urban genre of noir, which so often links the dangers of the city with the sexuality of femme fatales and other uncontrollable women, and against these histories of the political and corporate privatization of (non-normative) sexuality, *Times Square* challenges this production of urban spaces with a queer, punk rock love story that passionately and perversely takes place in public.

...

For more on the gentrification and redevelopment of Times Square in the name of "family values and safety," see Samuel Delaney's *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. For feminist theory about spatial politics, see Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions* and Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender*. And for all that Alan Moyle disapproved, the two-LP soundtrack for *Times Square* isn't bad at all, featuring tracks by Patti Smith, Lou Reed, the Ramones, Gary Numan and Suzi Quatro. He's also responsible for *Pump Up the Volume*, featuring a young Christian Slater as a low-fi shock jock who inspires his teenaged listeners to "stay hard." Thanks to Toby Beauchamp for sharing the love for *Times Square* and *The Legend of Billie Jean*.

Beginning this fall, I will be a postdoctoral fellow and assistant women's studies professor at a large Midwestern public university. Forced to leave my beloved Pacific Ocean, I anticipate much gnashing of teeth and tearing of hair. As of this writing, I don't have a new mailing address, but I will still be contact-able at: slander13@mindspring.com. Let me know if there's fun to be had in the Ann Arbor-Detroit area, seeing as how I missed the window on Piranhas' performances involving bare chests, duct tape and dead rats.



To a nightmare of
knowledge he opens up
the gate / And a blind-
ing revelation is laid
upon his plate / That
beneath the greatest
love is a hurricane of
hate / And God help
the critic of the dawn
—Phil Ochs

They don't make Jews like Jesus anymore

— Kinky Friedman and his Texas Jewboys

It was the day after Easter, and I was getting my annual haircut. Okay, maybe semi-annual. Jane, the woman who always takes on this

thankless task, asked me if I'd seen Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.

I had, as it happened, only a couple days earlier. I said that I was surprised to find it wasn't as bloody as the reviews had led me to believe. I'd also found it strange to sit in a cinema packed with people stuffing their faces with barrels of popcorn and slurping on mega-sized cokes as they watched western civilization's pre-eminent religious icon being flayed, tortured and crucified. But that's the post-modern era for you, isn't it?

"My husband and I thought it was beautifully done," said Jane, "but I was trying to figure out if it was true what they said, that it was prejudiced against the Jews."

I was the wrong person to ask about that. I'd been fuming for a couple months already about claims that "The Passion" was anti-Semitic.

"How," I demanded, "can a film be anti-Semitic when all of the good guys and only some of the bad guys are Jewish?"

Jane looked puzzled. "What do you mean? Which of the good guys were Jewish?"

"Well, the star of the show, for one," I said. "Not to mention his mother, his friends, all of his followers..."

Jane looked even more puzzled.

"Wait," she said, "are you saying that Jesus was Jewish?"

I thought she was winding me up. Jane's from Manchester, and they do have a droll sense of humor up there. But another look at her face told me that maybe she wasn't.

"Yes," I told her. "Jesus was Jewish. Everyone in the film except for the Romans was Jewish. That's why I don't understand this crap about how it's supposed to be anti-Semitic."

Jane was clearly wondering whether to believe me or not. "But I thought Jesus was Christian," she finally said.

I've known Jane for seven years. She never went beyond high school, but she's no dumbbell. She and her husband have started and run their own business. They're well traveled, well read, and, I had always thought, pretty sophisticated in a West London sort of way.

On the other hand, I grew up in a time when religion was much more widespread, and I had a religious education. Times have changed. Maybe I shouldn't expect people to know or care what religion Jesus was.

Still, even if you think Christianity and Judaism are nothing but ancient superstitions, both religions are at the very foundation of our culture and history. I think we should at least know their basic principles and beliefs, in the same way we know who the ancient Roman gods were and what they stood for. Erm, we do know who the ancient Roman gods were, don't we?

So I explained to Jane that while the followers of Jesus eventually became known as Christians, Jesus himself was a Jew. "He couldn't have been a Christian," I said, "because there was no Christian religion for him to be part of."

She still looked dubious, so I gave an example. "Look, suppose a bunch of people got mad at me and hung me up on a cross, and then afterward they started a religion about me. They might call themselves Livermoreans, but I wouldn't be a Livermorean, I'd just

be a Livermore."

Right about now Jane was looking as though she wouldn't mind pounding the first nail, especially when her husband joined in. Like most husbands, he was pleased to discover this evidence that his wife didn't in fact know everything. But once Jane was finally convinced that I wasn't making fun of her, the three of us settled down to a semi-serious conversation about religion.

I asked Jane if she considered herself religious, and Jane said, "Of course, I'm Christian."

"Church of England?" I asked, and she nodded. For our American readers, Church of England means you don't have to believe anything and you never have to go to church, which describes Jane to a T.

In fact it describes most of Britain. Very few people go to church here, something like eight-percent at last count. Churches are closing down left and right for lack of business. If it weren't for Muslim and Hindu immigrants, religion would be in danger of dying out completely.

Which made me wonder about a couple of things. First, if nobody believes this stuff anymore, why did so many people turn out to see a movie about the crucifixion that, whatever you think about it, didn't exactly qualify as light entertainment? And second, why did so many members of the liberal intelligentsia, the ones who normally style themselves as champions of free speech, get their knickers in such a twist over the very existence of this movie?

I'm not talking about critics who, for whatever reason, felt it wasn't a good movie. I'm talking about people who had never even seen it, who refused to see it as a matter of principle (e.g., "I'm not giving Mel Gibson any of my money"), and who, despite never having seen it, wrote articles reviling it as anti-Semitic, ridiculous, reactionary, and an embarrassment to modern civilization.

What's the big deal, I couldn't help asking. It's a rare movie these days that has any kind of overt religious content, while it's not at all rare for movies, TV shows, books, and songs to criticize or mock religion in general and Christianity in particular. Punk rockers are especially prone to delivering this sort of polemic, and I'm no exception: when I was in the Lookouts, one of our most predictable crowd-pleasers was a cheerful little ditty I wrote called "Fuck Religion."

It wasn't always wise to express such sentiments. If I'd tried singing "Fuck Religion" back in the 1950s, I might have been arrested for obscenity, if not blasphemy. But nowadays nobody bats an eye. Anti-religious punk rock bands, just like anti-American, anti-capitalist, anti-society and anti-parents punk rock bands, are a dime a dozen.

And while the language might be a bit more refined, similar sentiments abound in the mainstream media. So why do people feel so angered, so threatened by just one unapologetically religious movie? Do they really think that seeing *The Passion of the Christ*, will suddenly transform millions of Americans into fundamentalist loonies who want to turn the land of the free into a medieval theocracy?

I've got news for you. There already are millions of funda-

mentalist loonies who wouldn't mind seeing America turned into a medieval theocracy. There are also millions of anti-religious loonies who'd love to see churches made obsolete if not illegal. Luckily, in between them are a couple hundred million Americans who don't see why fundamentalists and atheists, religious and non-religious people can't peacefully co-exist.

Maybe you're offended by people who believe in miracles, who think Jesus rose from the dead and is coming on a white cloud to take all of them (except you, buddy) to heaven? Okay, so some beliefs are a little hard swallow.

Then again, I've heard atheists or agnostics dismiss ideas like transubstantiation or the Rapture as superstitious nonsense, only to turn around and argue in all seriousness that Marxism or anarchism or liberal humanism will produce the same utopia that religion has failed to deliver.

What's the difference? Whether you subscribe to far-fetched religious ideologies or equally far-fetched political ones, you're putting faith ahead of facts, wishes and hopes in front of hard-won practical experience.

One of the most common accusations leveled at Christians, especially the fundamentalist kind, is that they're intolerant of people who think or live differently than they do. I've met Christians like this, but frankly, I've never met anyone as intolerant as a hardcore anarchist. You doubt my word? Go to an anarchist convention (yes, they have them) and express a contrary opinion. It's the closest you'll ever come to experiencing what it was like to be a heretic during the Spanish Inquisition.

The same is true of every left wing or "revolutionary" group I've ever come in contact with. Get more than 50 or 100 leftists together in a common cause, and by the end of the day, you'll have three or four separate parties and factions, each accusing the others of being "counter-revolutionaries" and "capitalist lackeys." God help us if they ever got any real power; it would be like the religious wars of the late Middle Ages all over again.

When I first heard about Mel Gibson's movie, I thought Gibson had taken leave of his senses. But the more I learned about it, the more respect I had for the man. Originally this was because part of the movie was being filmed in Latin, and I'm generally in favor of almost anything involving Latin. My respect increased when it became known that Gibson had risked nearly every penny he owned to make a film that critics predicted would be box office poison.

That was—dare I use the word?—almost punk of him. True, maybe his father was a wack job who said that the Holocaust didn't happen, but who among us would want to be judged by our father's views? Not me, that's for sure. And true, maybe most punks wouldn't make a movie about Jesus Christ—at least not a flattering one—but what many punks would do is risk anything and everything to get their views across and stand up for what they believed in.

When the movie finally came out, though, I almost didn't go see it, because the reviews made it sound like it was a nonstop gorefest focusing only on giving us, as Phil Ochs put it in his own song about the crucifixion, "a picture of the pain." I'd grown up in

a Roman Catholic church that dwelt obsessively on suffering and turned it into the highest virtue. Though I try to keep an open mind about religion these days, the blood-drenched asceticism of old-style Catholicism is something I think the world can do without.

But it wasn't like that at all. Yes, there was plenty of blood and pain, but the message was not one of wallowing in it, but rather one of transcendence. You don't need to believe the first thing about Christianity—in fact it might help if you don't—to appreciate the film's metaphysical musings about the nature of existence and the purpose of life.

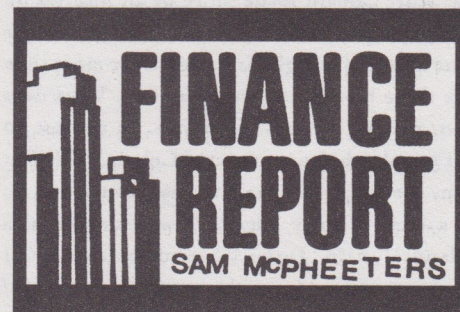
And ultimately, I think that's what bothered the "Passion"-bashers most: its contention that life does indeed have purpose and value, that it's not just an ironic joke. The same critics who excoriated "The Passion" for its violence spoke of Quentin Tarantino's films as being high art, even though Tarantino uses violence just as explicitly to make his point, whatever that point might be.

More precisely, he uses explicit violence to ram home his cynical, smirking Hobbesian view that life is a war of all against all, fated to be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short," and that the only sane response is to make a big joke (and a lot of money) out of it.

You don't need to be a master of exegesis to discern that I'm no Tarantino fan. I think the worldview he propounds is one of deep and abiding ugliness. I'm not quite ready to worship at the Church of Mel Gibson, but frankly, if I had to choose between the two filmmakers, my money would be on Mel.

Not because I wholeheartedly buy into all or any of Gibson's theological views, because I don't, but because he unhesitatingly stands up and says, "This is what I believe, this is what I'm willing to live for and perhaps even die for." By contrast, Tarantino comes across as a pasty-faced slimeball, the sort of worm that crawls out from under a rock, ready to sell you anything and give you nothing.

Maybe it's the new millennium, maybe it's just my time of life, but I think I've finally figured out at least one thing: having no values is so last century.



Falloujapalooza

Of the many sad chores of adulthood, not many are as poignant as the trampling of one's child-

hood terrors. If you were 10 during the Carter years, for example, you may have been traumatized by twin taboos known as the Sex Pistols and *Dawn Of The Dead*. Both hung from the overhead adult world as unexplained anomalies, obscene in their impenetrability. What kind of adults trafficked in such weirdness? None that I knew. Blink and suddenly it's 1997 and I'm clapping like a rube at the encore of a Sex Pistols reunion concert in San Francisco. Blink

again and it's 2004 and I'm in a theater full of teen-agers, wondering why I just shelled out nine dollars to see the remake of *Dawn Of The Dead*. In the bland hands of Jeep commercial director Zack Snyder, *DOTD* '04 is only barely distinguishable from the trailers before it, one long, expensive fart of explosions and rap-metal and ugly people doing wretched things.

Except for those first 10 minutes. The first 10 minutes of this movie scared me. A lot. The action is straightforward enough. Actress Sarah Polley wakes up in her suburban home, escapes her freshly dead boyfriend and emerges onto her front lawn to discover that civilization has fallen apart. For such an abusively crummy flick, this first scene seems spliced from the phantom world that lurks just below the post 9/11 universe. One day you wake up and things are burning and people are trying to kill you. "If I had done the opening 10 minutes and opening credits of the *Dawn of the Dead* remake," Quentin Tarantino recently told the *LA Weekly*, "I'd be very proud."

Maybe it's a stupid observation, but there's less fantasy here than I'd like. For Rwandans, dawn of the dead fell on the morning of April 7, 1994, when Hutus, mobilizing after the plane crash of president Habyarimana, began killing their fellow Tutsis. There is a western view, I think, of that genocide as a rural affair. But its mechanics were at least as urban (and faithful to the logic of bad nightmares) as those first 10 minutes of the *Dawn* remake. Writer Phillip Gourevitch probed the '94 massacre from four years in the future, and his description seems cinematically familiar:

"Neighbors hacked neighbors to death in their homes, and colleagues hacked colleagues to death in their workplaces. Doctors killed their patients and schoolteachers killed their pupils."

Kurt Cobain was found dead the next day. I'm writing in April, so his death anniversary is still fresh on the magazine racks. I'm not surprised that there's been more coverage in 2004 of Cobain than the Rwandans. And I don't think it's necessarily self-ish of Americans that Kurt Cobain made more of an impression the deaths of 800,000+ people in central Africa. That's how life works; the death of our next door neighbor moves us far more than the death of someone three blocks away we never met. What does surprise me is my own narrow frame of reference. In the last 10 years, I've met a lot of people who've intersected Cobain's life. But I have yet to meet anyone with even the slightest connection to Rwanda. Except for a crew of surly Nigerians who worked at a Cranston, Rhode Island Dunkin' Donuts I used to frequent, I don't think I've even met anyone from the entire continent of Africa. That's a large gray zone.

Unwanted introspection of an insulated life is only one on a long list of dreads this movie picks at.

There is fear of crime, fear of loss, fear of death, and being eaten, and of the apocalypse. If one can accept that there is some brutal interior to the human brain that makes people write computer viruses and kill seals, then it's not so hard to accept that there may be an even further reptilian inner core of brain matter that

reduces people to wheezing cannibals (or at least compels them to butcher their neighbors with machetes, grenades and something called the masu, which Gourevitch explains is "a club studded with nails").

It's been a month, and I keep thinking about this stupid movie. At least once a day I find myself

sizing up survival scenarios in the dressing room at the thrift store, in parking lots, at the supermarket. Last month's newspapers made hash of the "fast zombie" phenomenon in modern movies, as if this had some deep cultural significance. But most newspapers didn't bother to review the movie. The *LA Weekly* never covered the film and the *New Yorker* listed it only as a one liner in the 'Now Playing' section. These omissions seem ominously suspicious as I lay awake at night, pondering some wider conspiracy, listening for barely audible scrapes and shuffles in the back yard, police helicopters swooping over my neighborhood, searching by spotlight for other anonymous intruders.

Helicopters: when I moved to California in the last century these were a nightly occurrence, circling in lazy swoops over my neighborhood. Two years ago, the 210 freeway extension was completed three miles to the north. The missus and I drove up for the inauguration and walked on the clean, empty lanes and took some zombie photos with a disposable camera and red food coloring. When the freeway was opened for cars, the helicopters stopped. Perhaps the tides of meth pulled dealers and clandestine lab operators towards the least clogged freeway. Only this spring have the helicopters returned, in force. Their drone and searchlights set a tone of dread each night. Why are they back? Who do they seek in the dead of night?

These are familiar question marks. In downtown L.A., it's hard to not cross through the "homeless containment district" in skid row, passing the "zombies" that shuffle and beg and sleep under tarps, like corpses. At the train station last week, sizing up platforms and nearby lots for zombie escape routes, I overheard two guys talking about their sons in Iraq. This month's photos from Fallouja are more grisly than anything in the *DOTD* remake. The administration has invented its own motiveless killer responsible for the current carnage in Iraq; the "Baathist dead ender". When I read about KBR contract truck drivers being paid a hefty sum by Halliburton to risk being killed and mutilated, I have to think of Sarah Polley and her small gang driving their doomed trucks through crowds of undead antagonists. In the newspapers, Iraqi opposition fighters are usually blurred in flight. On the *DOTD* remake poster, the zombies are faceless ciphers. What is this "Green Zone"—that walled off section of central Baghdad, bordered by the Tigris on one side and feet of blast-proof concrete on the other—if not the classic compound of all zombie films?

On the gravest charge *DOTD* leaves me—that humanity is doomed—the crystal ball is murkier. Everything is doomed in the long run. Last year, British astronomer Martin Rees gave people 50/50 survival odds for the 21st century. Aren't those at least better odds than we had during the 20th century? ©

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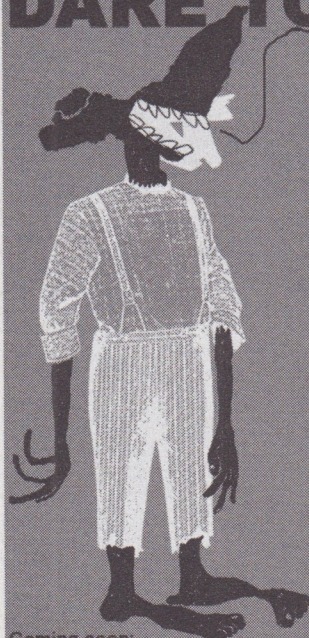
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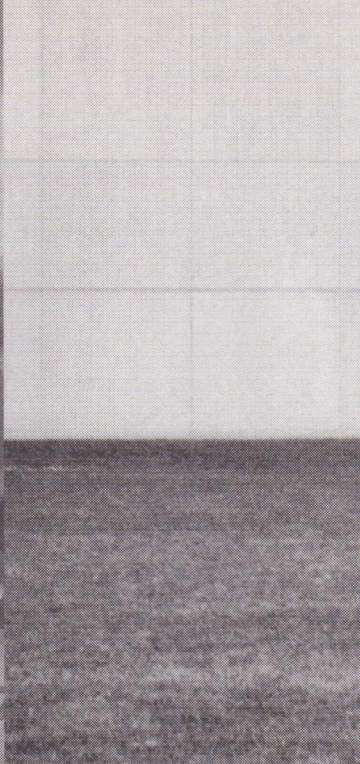
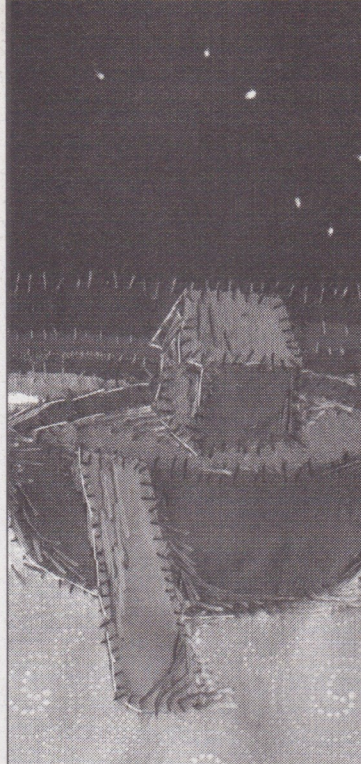
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Hairstyles of the Damned

by Joe Meno

The other problem I had was that I was falling in love with my best friend, Gretchen, who I thought the rest of the world considered fat. We were in her crappy car and singing, and at the end of the song "White Riot," the one by the Clash, I realized by the way I was watching her mouth pucker and smile and her eyes blink and wink, we were way more than friends, at least to me. I looked over at Gretchen driving and she was starting to sing the next song, "Should I Stay or Should I Go Now?" by the Clash again, and I said, "I love driving around with you, Gretchen," but because the radio was so loud all she could do was see my mouth move.

It was a Tuesday around four in the afternoon, the first semester of our junior year in high school, and neither one of us had anything to do, because Gretchen had just recently been fired from the Cinnabon at the mall for flipping off a female customer when she asked for more icing, and I wasn't allowed to work because my mother was very overprotective of me and insisted that I only focus on studying.

I yelled something to Gretchen again and she nodded at me and then turned her head back to drive and kept on singing and I guess I looked over at her, at her short blondish-pink hair—some of it hanging in her face, some tucked behind her ear, some dyed brighter pink than the rest—and I watched the way her mouth moved again and I noticed she didn't ever wear lipstick and it was one of the reasons I think I liked her; and also I smiled at how she was holding her small white hands on the steering wheel very seriously, like she was a new driver, which she was not, because she was seventeen and had been driving way before she had gotten her license last year. I also looked at her breasts; I looked at them and they were big, very big, more than I knew what to do with, and I guess the truth of the matter was they were big because she was fat, and it didn't matter to me then, not the way it would if I was like hanging out with Bobby B. or some other guy at the mall, and he'd be like, "Check out that porker," and I'd be like "Yeah," and then I'd laugh. Gretchen was fat, I mean, not like obese,

but she was definitely big, not her face so much, but her middle and behind.

Worse than that, she was known for kicking other girls' asses on a regular basis. It was not very cool. There was the awful hair-pulling incident with Polly Winchensky. There was the enormous black eye she gave Lisa Hensel. There was the time Gretchen broke Amy Schroeder's arm at a Halloween party—you know, when Amy Schroeder had rolled her eyes at Gretchen's costume, when she came as JFK post-assassination, with the black suit and blood and bullet holes, and Amy Schroeder said, "You really do look like a man," and Gretchen just turned and grabbed Amy Schroeder's arm and twisted it so hard behind her back that Amy Schroeder's school drama days were ended right there, just like that, so that poor Amy Schroeder had to go around for the next two years milking sympathy, like a fucking martyr wearing her air-cast everywhere, long after it could have possibly been needed for anything recuperative.

Also, well, also Gretchen wasn't the most feminine girl in the world, sincerely.

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She swore a lot and only listened to punk, like the Misfits and the Ramones and the Descendents, especially when we were in the car, because, although it had a decent stereo for a Ford Escort, there was a tape that had been stuck in the cassette player for about a year now and most of the time that was all it would play, and you had to jab the tape with a pen or nailfile to get it to start, and the tape was the same hand-picked mix Gretchen had thought was cool a year ago, which according to the label on the tape was what she had called *White Protest Rock, version II*.

Gretchen's mix-tapes, her music choices, were like these songs that seemed to be all about our lives, but in small random ways that made sense on almost any occasion. Like "Should I Stay or Should I Go?" Maybe it meant I should tell Gretchen how I was feeling. Or maybe it meant I should just go home. To me, the tapes were what made me like her, then love her so much: the fact that in-between the Misfits and the Specials, she would have a song from the Mommas and the Poppas, "Dream a Little Dream" or something like that. Those mix-tapes were the secret soundtrack to how I was feeling or what I thought about almost everything.

Also—and I don't know if I should mention this or not—Gretchen always called other people, even our friends, "douche-bags" or "douche-holes" or "cunts" or "cunt-holes" or "cunt-teasers" or "cunt-wads" or "cunt-heads" or even "cunt-asses," which doesn't even make sense when you think about it, things like that. The way she swore amazed me and again, it probably made me like her a lot more than any other girl I had ever met because she didn't ever seem to mind hanging out with me.

OK, so the thing of it was, the Homecoming Dance was like in three weeks and I hadn't asked anyone and I wanted to ask Gretchen, but I hadn't for good reasons: One, I didn't want her to know I liked-her-liked her; two, I knew she liked Tony Degan, this white power dude; and also—and this is the worst thing so I hate to admit it—but well, I didn't want the photographs. You know how they make you take your picture and everything? I didn't want photographs of me at Homecoming with a fat girl so that in fifty years I'd have to be reminded of what a loser I was because, well, I hoped things in the future were going to change for me.

"Do you want to go get something to

eat?" Gretchen asked. "I am fucking starving, because I don't know if you noticed or not, but I'm a big fat cow."

"Whatever," I said, turning the radio down so we could talk. "Where do you want to go eat? Haunted Trails?"

Haunted Trails was on 79th St., this monster-movie themed miniature golf course and video arcade, really the only place we or any of the other stoners and punks hung out. "No, wait, forget it," she said. "All those kids'll be there and I look so gross. I'm supposed to be on this diet where I only eat white foods, it's like racist or something. Seriously. I am disgusted with myself, you know? I practically am a boy. Look at me. I practically have chest hair. I could join the football team or something."

"Shut up," I said. "You just said that so I'd say how you look OK, so I'm not even saying it."

"Oh, you figured me out, douche bag. No, I mean it, look at me: I'm practically a boy; I practically have a dick." And as she slowed the crappy blue Escort to a stop at the next light, she bunched the front of her jeans up so it looked like she had an erection. "Look, look, my god, I have an erection! I've got blue balls! Oh,

they hurt! I need help! Give me some porn, hurry! Come on, let's go rape some cheerleaders! Oh, they hurt!"

I laughed, looking away.

"Forget it, though, seriously. I am so disgusted with myself. Hey, did I tell you that I'm in love with Tony Degan again?"

"What?" I asked. "Why don't you forget him? He's like fucking 26. And a white power asshole. And, I dunno, that should be enough."

"I'm not really in love with him. I'd just like for him to totally de-virginize me."

"What?" I asked.

"You know, just have some meathead who doesn't give a shit about you, just get it over with, you know, so you wouldn't have to talk to him ever again? That way, it wouldn't be like uncomfortable afterwards."

"Yeah, I could see how being like raped by some white power dude wouldn't be uncomfortable."

"Exactly," she said. "That's why you're like my best girlfriend."

"Gretchen, you know I'm not a girl, right?" I asked.

"I know, but if I think of you as a guy, then I have to worry about what I eat in front of you."

"But I don't care how you look," I said, and I knew I was lying.

...

At the video arcade later, Gretchen was crying. It was something I'd never seen before in my life. "What's wrong?" I asked. I was in the middle of a high-scoring game of Phantom Racer and not really listening. I turned and saw her cheeks were pink and shiny with tears, and she was biting her bottom lip to keep from sobbing. She had on her black hoodie and, in the light, it looked like her bright pink hair was washing away to white-blond again. I hate to say it, but thinking about it now, standing there with her arms crossed and looking sad, looking down, with the flashing lights from Galaga and Bonn Scott from the great AC/DC wailing about "TNT" through the arcade speakers, all of it mixing in with the click, click of the air hockey machine and the blips and buzzes and outer space noises from the other video

games, well, I dunno, she looked really gentle standing there. Real pretty.

"Tony Degan asked me to go for a ride with him," she finally said.

"So?" I said, looking back at the blinking screen.

"So, I didn't."

"So?"

"So, I just saw some fucking skank making out with him."

"So? Big deal." I shrugged my shoulders and zoomed past a stalled-out race car, downshifting to regain speed, but two red-eyed pixilated demons lurched into my path. I looked over and Gretchen was gone. In a moment then, from the parking lot outside, I could hear someone let out a scream. I finished that level and watched as my score was totaled. Some dick with the name RADi had blown all of my old scores and it seemed pretty pointless to even try for first place, because RADi had to be some retarded video game genius who worked for the video game company, you know, kind of like The Who's Tommy? I mean who scores 1,500,200 points anyways? Retarded video game playing geniuses. I dunno. I heard the scream from the parking lot again and since my score wasn't shit, I just turned and walked on out.

Outside, it was very bright in the daylight and also very quiet. I had to cover my eyes to let them adjust to the sun, which was just starting to go down. It was around five o'clock. Outside, the Haunted Trails Miniature Golf and Amusement Arcade was pretty much empty. There were all the usual weird horror-themed miniature golf obstacles—the Creature from the Black Lagoon, Hole 3, the green monster rising out of the middle of a blue-green swamp; a coffin with a crappy plastic mechanical hand that rose and fell sporadically; dancing skeletons that you had to putt past—but no one was really around. Some dad and his two little girls were arriving at Hole 8, which was a big wooden haunted castle, in which you had to hit the ball through the drawbridge. The dad was lining up his shot; he had a shiny black eye-patch over his left eye. They all looked like

they had been in some kind of accident. Both of the little girls had bandages on their faces and one had a broken arm. It made me wonder for a minute. Then one of the girls kicked a blue golf ball with the tip of her shoe into the hole and they all laughed. *Everything is good when your dad bothers to be around*, I thought to myself. Across from the miniature golf course, some overweight jocks were hitting balls in the "fast pitch" batting cages. One guy had on an American flag baseball hat and a T-shirt that said "One Tequila, Two Tequila, Three Tequila, Floor." He knocked the hell out of an inside pitch and shouted, "He shoots, he scores!" and I decided I did not like that. Across from the batting cages, a Mexican guy was selling hairy-looking hotdogs at the Spooky Snack Shop. There were exactly two fat kids speeding along on the go-cart drag way behind that; they were twins in yellow paper birthday hats. They both had the same joyful expression on their round, tubby faces and I thought how nice it would be to be a kid again. But not fat. At the gates, there was the giant plastic Frankenstein statue rising up to the sky, brandishing his axe. His expression seemed to say, *Yes, I am just as lonely up here*. I waved to him and walked around back.

I lit up a cigarette and looked across the parking lot to where all the stoners hung out. I was trying smoking—what the hell, everyone else did it. I sucked in a mouthful and coughed like a war veteran, then flicked the cigarette behind me, doing my best strut across the parking lot. At the end of the lot there were two or three cool-looking cars: a rebuilt blue metallic-flake Nova, an Impala which was rusty but still sweet, and two decent-looking vans. The guys with the best-looking mustaches and the best cars all hung out in the parking lot. They were kids who were still in high school but because of their fine mustaches and fine cars got some pussy and looked old enough to buy beer. Also, there were older guys like Tony Degan, who had to be like 26 but still hung out with high school kids, you know, to sell them dope

and talk shit and to try and get some teenage trim. Tony did well, mostly because he was older and knew what to do to get a girl to believe whatever it was he was saying with lines like, "Hey, I really feel like I can open up with you," while jamming his hand down the poor girl's pants. Or so I had heard anyway.

As I got closer to the lot, I saw Bobby B.'s purple wizard van and Bobby B. and Tony Degan were standing in front of it, leaning against the hood, laughing. Bobby B. was a kid from my street, a senior, a year older than me, with long black hair, gold sunglasses, and acid-washed jeans. He would sit out in his garage all night, smoking and drinking and trying to get the goddamn starter on his van to fire. The van, a '77 Dodge, looked good—it was bright purple and had this magnificent wizard airbrushed on one side of it—but it ran like shit. But it was still a van, his van, a good-looking wizard van. Sitting in the glove compartment of the wizard van, Bobby B. always had about five pairs of girls' underwear, from girls he had made it with. He called it his "trophy case." I would open the glove box, and the panties would all seem to sing a hymn to me—*Halleluiah!*—glowing with golden light. Also, with much gratitude, I must mention Bobby B. was the one who had turned me on to AC/DC when he loaned me "High Voltage" in eighth grade. For that, I would be eternally grateful.

Beside Bobby B. was Tony Degan, who, on the other hand was, like I said, maybe 25, 26, tall but lanky, wearing a yellow T-shirt that said, "My grandparents went to the Bahamas and all I got was this stupid T-shirt." He was smoking and nodding and shaking his head. That was what he did: Nodded to himself and smiled, like there was a joke about you that you weren't really getting. He looked high most of the time—maybe he was, I dunno. He had blonde hair, which was longer in back, combed-up with grease of some kind, and two black wristbands just above his hands, though he wasn't a jock or in a band, but he had that look, like 1-2-3, he could kick your ass.

As soon as I made it around the corner, I heard the scream again and saw Gretchen holding some girl I didn't know in a headlock. Like always, Gretchen was winning. The other girl's eyes were big and bugged-out with panic. The other girl was very skinny and very slutty-looking. She had on spider-web nylons, which were torn, and a black jean jacket with a huge Megadeth patch. She was on her knees and having a hard time breathing. Drool was pouring over Gretchen's forearm and onto the cement. It was not very cool-looking.

"Dude, what's the malfunction here?" I asked.

"Brian Oswald, what's up with you, dude?" Bobby B. asked with a nod. He had a nice mustache coming in: thin, but it extended around his narrow lips all the way down to his chin, biker-style. I had been trying for months to grow a mustache but there was nothing; not anything: no stubble, no shadow, not anything. I was a junior in high school who still looked like a junior-high kid. "So what's fucking going on?" Bobby B. asked again, slapping my hand.

"You know, nothing," I said.

"You break that high score on Phantom Racer yet?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"Fuck. They must have some fucking expert come in and reset it every week."

"Yeah," I said. "So what's the deal here?" I asked.

With an amazing thud, Gretchen slammed the girl's head off the side of a parked LeBaron. "Ohhhhhh" everyone moaned.

"Fucking chicks," Bobby B. said.

"Yeah," I said. "Chicks." I turned to Gretchen and shouted, "dude, Gretchen, fucking relax."

Like always, she just ignored me.

"Aw, let her go already," Tony mumbled, still grinning. He ran his hand through his dirty blonde hair which was thick with grease and rubbed his own neck. "She didn't do nothing."

Gretchen's chubby face was pink, turning red, and she gave in finally, shoving the girl against the hood of some-

body's station wagon. She held her finger up to the girl's face and said, "The next time . . . The next time, your ass is grass." Everybody standing around said "Ewwwww," and clapped and Gretchen picked up her hoodie and wiped her nose, which was running. The other girl limped away, her mouth bleeding, while Tony Degan kept on laughing and nodding.

"You're fucking dead," the girl shouted from across the safety of the parking lot. "I'm gonna get my friends and we're gonna kick your ass."

Gretchen just turned to me and said, "let's fucking go already," and I nodded, without a word, which was my way at the time, because I chose to live my life like fucking Zatoichi the blind samurai, you know, the samurai dude from the '60s movies? I was going through that phase, watching nothing but samurai movies and horror flicks. That was some serious metal, you know, the blind swordsman with his flashing sword. If you don't know, you need to check those movies out. Anyway, I was deadly fucking silent—deadly fucking silent—most of the time. I was a shy kid and I was afraid what I said sounded stupid, so I hardly ever said anything. I was the third wheel. Fifth wheel? I was the fucking wheel you didn't really need, but I still hung around. I thought maybe my silence would one day impress somebody. As of yet, it hadn't done much for me. Most people, when they thought of Brian Oswald, probably said "Who?" Then someone might say, "That dude, the quiet one that is always hanging around." Then the other person would probably say "Who?" again. I was invisible to most people, I guess. For example, when Gretchen and I hopped back in the Ford Escort, the radio was working—a one in a million chance—and we motored away to the tune of "Dirty Deeds" by the great AC/DC, before Gretchen switched the radio station on me without asking. ©

Excerpted from the novel Hairstyles of the Damned, to be published in September by Punk Planet Books: www.punkplanetbooks.com.

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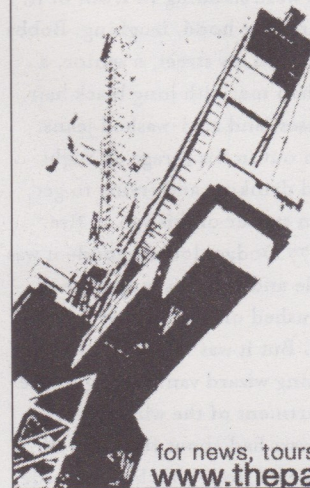
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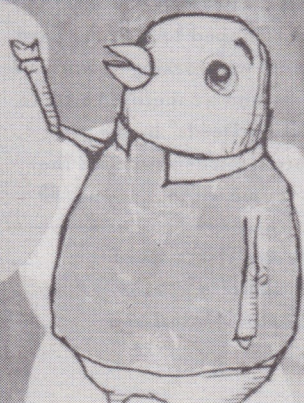


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How to Paint a Room

By Dan Grzeca

A couple of months ago I got a phone call from my old buddy from the punk days, Raul Montessarian. Raul's had a crazy life running around the world getting in and out of trouble: skating through Managua, avoiding bullets in Beirut, and trying every kind of mustard known to man. When the phone rings and Raul's on the line, you really don't know what to expect. So I was taken aback when, after not hearing from him for 18 months, the first thing out of his mouth is "Dan, I think I need some decorating advice."

When I graduated college with an art degree, I knew I'd better have a day job. For the last six years I've run an interior painting service to pay the bills while I work on painting, illustration, and designing silkscreen posters for free jazz and rock bands.

"OK, OK, man, enough about your past—just tell me what I need to do to paint this place"

Shopping List

Since Raul was on a budget (writing freelance for skate mags and *Foreign Affairs* still hadn't quite freed him from the hustle) I recommended the following shopping list:

1) Paint. Go to the paint section of your local hardware store, paint store, or unnamed behemoth with orange signage and look through the "mis-tint" section. Here you can find perfectly fine paint that was not quite tinted to the exact color someone else wanted. Depending on the store, you can find gallons for three to six bucks generally.

I told Raul to find two gallons of similarly colored paint, since his room was about 15x18 feet, with 8 foot ceilings. I recommended flat latex or acrylic paint, since that paint tends to hide wall defects better than the shinier stuff. He picked up a few gallons for the walls, an inexpensive gallon of flat white for his ceiling, and a gallon of a white semi-gloss for the trim.

2) Brush. Buy a synthetic-bristle brush that is either a 2.5" or 3" angled sash. Spend about \$10. The better the brush, the easier the job. If you buy a really cheap one, it will fall apart when you're painting and you will hit the bottle early, my friend.

3) Paint tray, roller cage (this is the device that holds the roller), a stick to screw the roller onto (an old broom handle will also work), a few paint rollers (either 1/2" or 3/8" nap - the thicker 1/2" is good for ceilings), some decent tape (the best you can afford—I like blue, but it'll cost ya.)

4) If you don't have old junky blankets to use to cover your floors, buy some thick plastic or a blue tarp to protect your boxes of records and furniture.

5) Borrow a 6 foot ladder from a friend or relative.

6) A big 5 gallon plastic bucket to mix your paint gallons in.

7) If you have to fix any cracks, pick up either some dry sheetrock plaster or a small container of pre-mixed. Also get a 6 inch putty knife.

8) Caulk. Paintable white caulk can be had for about \$1.75 at most places. Pick up a tube or two. If you don't have a caulk gun, you'll need one. The "dripless" kinds are nice and won't dribble caulk all over the place.

9) Sandpaper. I like to use sanding sponges, which have a medium and rough side.

Painting

Start with the prepwork. Patch any cracks or holes with the plaster, allow to dry and lightly sand. Caulk the areas where your trim meets the wall and, more importantly, around any windows—it'll eliminate drafts and save on heating. Look over the whole room and sand down anything that looks annoying. Also be sure to pull out old nails left by the last person to live there.

Once you are done with that, it's time to start painting your ceiling. Using your brush, paint around the edges of the ceiling and around any light fixtures. The painter term for this is "cutting in," which sounds more badass than it really is. With your roller cage attached to the paint stick/broomhandle, start painting the ceiling in a logical order. Make a row, painting squares approximately 2 ft by 2 ft in W's and M's and then filling in. Do this until the ceiling is covered. Once it's dry, do a second coat.

The walls are pretty much the same—if you're using latex paint, you can "cut in" the entire room and then roll out the walls. If you're using satin, however, you will have to go one wall at a time, since the paint will dry strangely if you wait too long. For the cutting, be patient. Go along the ceiling line slowly, falling away from the ceiling so as not to splash avocado green on your nice white ceiling. On the second go 'round, you can fill in the areas that don't look up to par.

On to the rolling. Again, do the W and M motion, from one corner to the other, working in rows. When you finish one row, lightly make a "sweep" by lightly rolling over the wall from the ceiling to the floor—do this without adding more paint. It will smooth out the paint you've already applied. Again, you will need to do two coats unless you picked a *really* dark or intense color, in which case welcome to the world of three to four coats, late night radio, and snack food.

After the walls are good and dry, you can paint the trim. Tape off the floor or carpet, and then slowly and methodically apply the paint. Again, do two coats.

When you finish each step, be sure to clean your brush in warm, soapy water and clean it out right away. Spin it between your hands to get the water out. This can be a fun game late at night. A good brush can last 10 years if you take care of it well. Don't leave it soaking in water overnight—it ruins the brush and makes it look like a curly hippie.

The best advice I can give is to be patient, have fun, and listen to good music with the windows open. I'm happy to report that Raul's eggplant and celery living room has been home to frequent fashion shows and political discussions. If Raul can do this, you certainly can too. ©

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

WALKING WITH WEEDS

The act of walking might not seem to have anything to do with food, but it's been on my mind lately since I've been reading about its history. The book *Wanderlust* addresses the right-of-way laws in Europe. Walkers, hikers, and mountaineers can traverse across land, regardless of ownership, due to a right-of-way law that allows trails to cross privately owned property. Europeans have a different approach to land and, consequently, food. There is no right-of-way law in America. With limited land, European agriculture becomes a part of culture rather than a separate industry, as it is in America. *Wanderlust's* author, Rebecca Solnit, postulates that American society has become removed from agriculture because we don't have a right-of-way law, which would allow us to experience all types and uses of land.

American land is strictly divided into recreational and productive zones. This keeps us disconnected from our food sources. We can observe flora and fauna, but this scenario doesn't allow us to learn about harvesting from the land. Foraging for food in the wild is a lost concept. In other cultures it's a way of life, not just a novelty—what would be considered inedible by our culture is food for others. Some wild greens that we would consider weeds can be harvested to make delicious food. According to the *Herbalist Almanac*, Europeans survived off of weeds during wartimes, helping to stave off starvation. Ironically, some of these natural foods are on the shelves of your local market.

Know your weeds

Last summer I joined a community sustainable agriculture group where a farmer dropped off produce once a week. Nearly every single week of the summer we were given a couple handfuls of a green called **purslane**, or **pigweed**. City dwellers are generally clueless to such things, but anyone that knows a little botany—or pays attention to what is growing on the roadsides—would know the weed. It grows abundantly during the warm weather months in our temperate climate. In trying to figure out what to do with my abundance of purslane, I discovered it grows wild in over 40 different varieties. Like most weeds, it is best harvested before flowering. It has fleshy leaves and rubbery stalks, a little like watercress (a weed that grows in cold water streams). The taste is peppery, like watercress, and can be eaten raw or cooked. The leaves are not as bitter as the stalks. The stems can be boiled or pickled. When mixed with other raw greens, purslane adds a punch to salads. In Middle Eastern cooking, purslane is used to make the dish fattouch.

Another obvious weed is the **dandelion**. All those times I just ran them over with my mom's lawnmower, I could have harvested a

day's worth of food. The dandelion never grows where there is no human activity. Early pioneers never saw a trace of them; once the plant was introduced for medicinal purposes, millions sprang up. The French word for dandelion, *pissenlit*, references the diuretic quality of the leaves. Historically, the leaves were prepared and ingested for just such qualities. Along with the leaves, the flower and root also treat various ailments. Most likely, you can find the greens in your nearest market. They're a little bitter, so they should be added to other greens if eating them raw. When cooking the greens, use them as you would spinach. Braising is a good option, or sauté them in butter with a sprinkle of salt. The flower is used to make wine or jelly. The roots are used like chicory, as an addition to coffee or a substitute for it.

Sorrel is wild grass that can be found mainly growing in meadows or sandy soil near beaches. The plant averages two feet in height and is slender with reddish flowers at the top. It is most closely related to rhubarb, sharing rhubarb's tartness and acidity, but is actually a member of the buckwheat family. The Romans prized sorrel for its digestive qualities. It was also used to prevent scurvy in the Middle Ages. The Pilgrims brought it to North America, where it rapidly spread throughout the continent. Sorrel leaves are shaped like an arrow, averaging six to eight inches long and resemble spinach. Garden sorrel sometimes has serrated edges and is the stronger tasting of the two varieties. In the kitchen, crushed raw leaves can be used to remove stains from hands. Sorrel can be eaten raw or cooked; its acidity adds a lemony taste to dishes. Cooked, the stems should be removed and could be pureed for soup, or a sauce.

Nettle, or stinging nettle, is usually found growing alongside roads and water banks, most commonly on the coast of the Pacific Northwest. The nettle plant also has a peppery taste, but gets its notorious reputation from the stinging hairs that cover the plant which can cause rashes. The plant should be harvested before the stems harden. As long as the top of the leaves aren't touched, you shouldn't get stung. If you do get stung,—a white bumpy rash develops—the plant's juice provides the antidote. As soon as the leaves are dried or cooked, the plant loses its irritating qualities. The dried leaves are crushed to make a tea. Often used like spinach, the fresh green leaves can be pureed and made into soup or sautéed. Only very young leaves can be eaten raw. The nettle plant has a high level of chlorophyll, keeping the cooked leaves green longer than most.

Mustard greens come from the plant known for producing the seed used in the popular yellow condiment, but the leaves of this plant are edible as well. There are nearly 40 varieties of the mustard plant; the most common are black mustard, white mustard, Indian mustard, and wild mustard. The mustard leaves often seen in produce markets are usually Indian mustard greens.

EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

Mizuna is the Japanese version of these greens. Mustard leaves are peppery in taste and have been described as a cross between cabbage and black mustard. They should be eaten cooked. Most common is sautéed with bacon or ham and served as a side dish, much like collard greens, which are from the same family.

Collard greens originated in eastern regions of the world, near the Mediterranean and Asian provinces. A member of the cabbage family, collards don't grow into a tight collection of leaves like most cabbages; instead loosely formed leaves grow at the top of a tall stem. Collards can withstand extreme temperatures and may explain its survival in the Southern US. Collards were introduced to North America by African slaves and remained mainly part of Southern cooking until demand increased its marketability throughout the country. You can eat collards raw, but they have a powerful flavor. They are usually added to soups and stews or sautéed and served as a side dish topped with a sauce. Most popular for its ability to maintain structure during steaming or boiling, collards can hold up to most smoked meats, particularly pork.

Wild chicory grows along roadsides and within open fields throughout the temperate climates of North America, Europe, and Africa. Originally used for medicinal purposes, chicory is a bitter vegetable with leaves similar to the dandelion. Chicory roots are ground and added to coffee—known as "New Orleans," or "Creole" style—offering a rich, bitter taste and deepening the color. The root can also be ground into flour. Most often eaten raw, chicory is best added to a salad. Chicory has a sharp, slightly bitter taste and can also be cooked, braised and sauced, or added to soups.

Burdock is most commonly known for its root, but the shoots and leaves can be eaten as well. Originating in Siberia, burdock is known for its burrs that catch on animal fur and clothes. Growing mainly in temperate regions, it can be found growing in the wild most commonly in Asia, Europe, and North America. It's cultivated as a vegetable in Japan, mainly for the root. Roots average between one and two feet in length. Preparation of the white flesh is similar to that of asparagus. The leaves can be braised or used in soups. Tea is made from the flowers. Burdock's medicinal properties range from treating colds and throat infections to diuretic and blood purification uses. The leaves can be dried and applied to any inflammation to ease pain.

Forage

If you do decide to forage for any of these greens, be sure you know whether herbicides, have been used in the area, which would make the greens inedible. Also, look around the spot where the weed is growing to make sure that nothing potentially harmful, like animal droppings, exist which could contaminate the plant with various harmful bacteria. Consult a reference book before foraging just to make sure that you're collecting the right weeds. Most weeds increase in bitterness as they mature, so depending on your taste and plan for the weeds, pick them at

A simple salad.

Choose an array of greens, using some type of lettuce as the base with other types of greens added for taste and texture. Fresh, washed raw greens should be torn and placed in a bowl. The leaves should be completely dry so the dressing will cling to the leaves. A variety of fresh herbs can be added for additional flavor, like basil, parsley, marjoram, or chervil. Seasonings like pepper shouldn't be necessary with the addition of any of the above weeds. Salads should be dressed just before serving, so the greens can remain in the bowl under service.

Italian style dressing

When ready, salt the leaves and toss them. Pour oil over the leaves—olive oil, walnut oil, or grapeseed oil are some options. Toss the leaves until they are glossy. The oil coats the leaves and protects them from the acid of the vinegar, which starts to 'cook' the greens. A few drops of vinegar should be sufficient. Lemon juice can be used too. The general ratio is three parts oil to one part vinegar. Gently toss the salad and serve.

Scandinavian style dressing

Sprinkle sugar—about two teaspoons and the finely chopped zest of one lemon over the leaves and toss gently. Sprinkle with fresh lemon juice—about two teaspoons. Salt and pepper to taste and serve.

their youngest to ensure the freshest, mildest taste. Once you locate a weed for harvesting, leave some of the plant so that it can continue to grow.

Storage

If you purchase any of these greens, look for bunches with crisp leaves. To store greens, poke some holes in a plastic bag and leave the greens unwashed in your crisper until ready for use. They should keep three to four days like this, but some greens are more delicate. Watercress in particular should be stored in a container of water with the leaves submerged and the stems sticking up. When using the greens, it's best to wash them in a few changes of water to remove all the dirt. The leaves should be dried before using. You can roll them in a dishtowel or use a salad spinner. ©

DIY SEX EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

Dear Sex Lady,

What's the deal with blue balls? Sometimes if I get an erection and don't cum, my balls start to hurt. Is it caused by semen building up? Can it cause damage to my dick?

Ah, blue balls. As a girl, I grew up thinking that blue balls were nothing more than a sad excuse for guys to pressure girls into having sex—"Come on baby, you got me all turned on, now you have to fuck me or I'll get blue balls." I figured it was just some made-up term for sexual frustration. Then I became a dyke and I never thought about them again until I got this letter. So I did a little research and, with some help from the good people of scarleteen.com, I now know that it is indeed a real condition, albeit not a very serious one.

The technical term for blue balls is *vasocongestion* and it works like this: When a man becomes aroused, the arteries carrying blood to the genital area enlarge, while the veins carrying blood away from the genital area become more constricted than they are when you aren't turned on. This causes an increase in the amount of blood trapped in the penis and testicles, which in turn helps you to get your nice, stiff erection and swollen balls. When you have an orgasm, the arteries and veins return to their normal size. If you don't have an orgasm, that blood can get trapped in there and can lead to an achy, sometimes painful feeling in the testicles. The term "blue balls" comes from the bluish tint that nuts can take on when they are engorged. This pain, however, can usually be easily eradicated by masturbating (when's the last time someone prescribed that for pain?) or, some say, by taking a cold shower or exercising. Obviously, *this condition is never an excuse to try and talk anyone into touching your dick if they don't want to*. You are at absolutely no risk for any damage to your cock and, from what I gather, most guys can easily make themselves come in a matter of minutes, so you shouldn't have to suffer for too long.

That said, pain in your cock, balls, pussy, or abdomen can be a sign of something more serious, so if you have these kinds of symptoms at times other than when you have been turned on and not had an orgasm, go see your doctor just to be sure.

FYI, women also experience increased blood flow to their genitals when they are turned on and can experience a similar sensation when they don't have an orgasm. Let's call that purple pussy!

Dear Sex Lady,

I am 17 and have sex with my boyfriend. We are safe and always use condoms but last time it broke! I do not want to get pregnant. Isn't there some sort of emergency birth control or morning-after pill or something I can take? Help!

Condoms are great and very effective against pregnancy and the transmission of diseases*, but like everything else in this freakin' world, sometimes they don't work like they are supposed to. If you find that a condom has broken during intercourse or if you have unprotected vaginal sex for any reason, there is something

called Emergency Contraception (EC) that can help prevent pregnancy even *after* someone has come in you. These pills are available from health care providers, your local Planned Parenthood, or a feminist health center (always the best place to go if you can). You can also call 1-888-NOT-2-LATE to get information on the emergency contraception provider nearest you.

Timing is very important in these situations. You only have about 100 hours (or 120 depending on who you ask) for this method to be effective and the sooner you get the medication and start taking the pills, the better. ECs are hormone pills that, when taken as directed, prevent a pregnancy from forming. They don't abort an already-established pregnancy. Some types of pills are "combination pills" which contain both estrogen and progestin—synthetic hormones like the ones a woman's body makes naturally—while others are progestin-only. Your health care provider will help you figure out which one is best for you. The combined hormones are taken in two doses, 12 hours apart. Progestin-only pills can be taken in one dose or in two doses, 12 hours apart.

Plan B and Preven are the two drugs designed specially for emergency contraception, but some traditional birth control pills can be taken in high doses for the same effect. However, we all know better than to just start overdosing on birth control pills, *right?* If you have birth control pills, don't just take a whole month's worth the day after you have unprotected sex. It may indeed stop you from getting pregnant, but it may not and it could cause other problems as well. Emergency Birth Control can be used repeatedly, but it is not recommended as a regular form of birth control. It can be kinda rough on your system.

The thing you need to remember when something like this happens is that there are people out there to help you. You don't need to go through this alone. In most major (and non-major) cities there is some sort of feminist or women-oriented health center and Planned Parenthoods are all over the country. You do, however, want to try and avoid those sham pregnancy-help centers that advertise help for women who think they might be pregnant or are considering abortion but are really anti-choice centers designed to scare vulnerable women into having babies that they don't want. Places like this won't help you with the Emergency Birth Control pills or help you find anyone who will.

* To reduce the risk of condom breakage, store your condoms out of the sunlight and away from the heat. Pay attention to the expiration date and don't use condoms that have expired, as they are more likely to break. Also, use plenty of lube with your condom and pinch it at the top when you put it on. This extra space at the tip makes a place for the come to accumulate ☺

E-mail me at diysex@punkplanet.com. My shop, *Early to Bed*, is at 5232 N. Sheridan in Chicago. We're online at www.early2bed.com.

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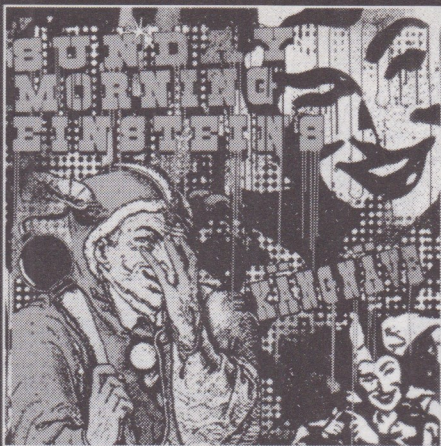
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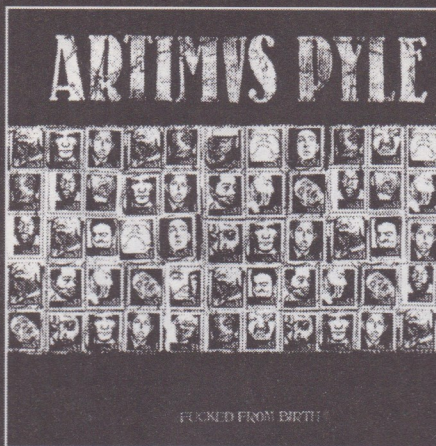
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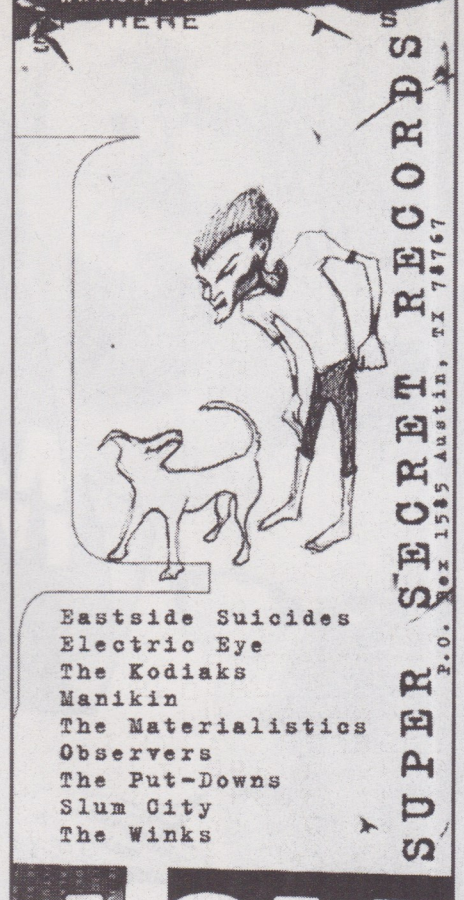
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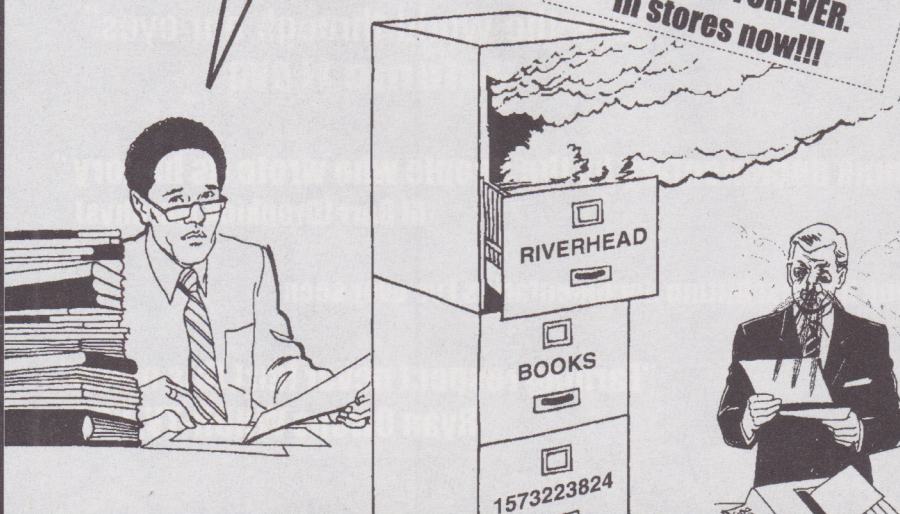
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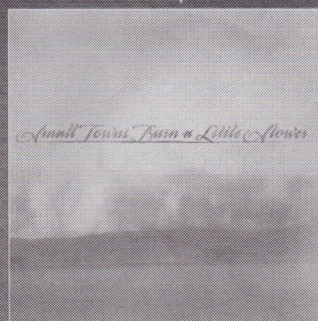
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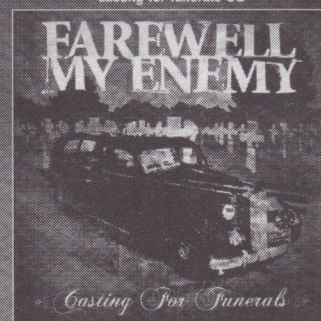
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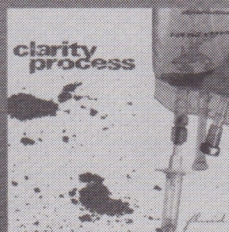
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music

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Edited by Kyle Ryan (KR)

☛ A Day At The Fair - The Prelude, CDEP

Chris Barker is famous for being the singer of Lanemeyer, which is one of those bands that gets mentioned for shaping some of the more popular strains of punk that emerged in the past few years. But his current band, A Day At The Fair, is much more a throwback to simple early '90s pop-punk. It's not pop-punk of the "la la" variety, but is just very well composed pop played with enough balls to keep it firmly within the realm of punk rock. The focus is on the songwriting, with each of the songs more complex than it appears. There's a somewhat annoying lead guitar line in the overlong seven-minute final song on this EP, but that's this EP's only imperfection. (AE)

Springman Records, PO Box 2043, Cupertino, CA 95015-2043, www adayatthefair.com

*A Spectre Is Haunting Europe - Astonishing Tales Of The Sea, CD

Ethereal, intelligible and beautiful modern goth rock that easily holds a place amongst the past greats. Think back to Bauhaus, Siouxsie and Sisters Of Mercy, and add a bit of a dark pop twist. Think forward to current bands like Soviet or Turn Pale. Light, eerie guitar lines bounce off of thick, ghostly bass lines, and singer Jean Hebert's flawless vocals soar overhead in a most perfectly dark and monotone direction. A slightly rhythmic and off-kilter post-punk style is just the right touch on a few of the songs. This is an awesome band, and it'd be worth it to track the album down. (MG)

Self-released, www.simulacre.ca/spectre

☛ A Wilhelm Scream - Mute Print, CD

I was looking forward to hearing this CD after hearing a couple MP3s awhile ago. Now it's sitting in my grubby, fat, Cheeto-stained fingers and it's no letdown. The CD gets off to an awkward start with a short, minute-long song with odd lyrics (unfortunately I didn't receive lyrics to properly judge them), but after that, this CD shows 1) that pop punk can still be challenging and interesting and 2) that Nitro doesn't totally suck. A Wilhelm Scream takes a foundation of fast punk and adds lots of nice vocal melodies and dual guitars with metallic influences. I know that sounds like most pop punk in the '90s, but these guys have stepped it up with Iron Maiden style-guitar parts and vocals that alternate between sweetly melodic to more aggressive and hardcore-influenced. They almost remind of a more metallic version of the Swedish band Adhesive, if anyone remembers them. Anyway, this is an impressive CD. And the Blasting Room recording doesn't hurt, either. (NS)

Nitro, 7071 Warner Ave., Suite F736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.nitrorecords.com

Aartila - ...Ja Kaikki Kuitenkin Paatty Kuolemaan!, CD

Finnish hardcore from members of Meanwhile, Riistetyt and Totalitar. Knowing very little about Scandinavian hardcore, I did some research and discovered they sound a lot like '83 hardcore from that area. The lyrics are translated into English in the insert, which was a great idea. This is solid, heavy and intense. (TK)

Hardcore Holocaust, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Aceyalone - All Balls Don't Bounce Revisited, 2xCD

Intelligent hip-hop with a jazzy influence including an upright bass. Beats are mellow but funky, while the vocalists create complex rhythms on top of it all. (SJ)

Project Blowed, 4343 Leimart Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90008, www.projectblowed.com

☛ Aceyalone - Love & Hate, CD

Another well-versed release from Freestyle Fellowship's breakout MC shows that not only is hip-hop alive and well, it can still be fun and deliver a serious message simultaneously. RJD2 whips up two tracks for Ace (only one of which features his usual recipe of funky beats) and El-P puts forth more effort on "City Of Shit" than he does on recent material released by his own label. The album has plenty of great cuts, but like most Aceyalone records (even his incredible *A Book Of Human Language*) they're nestled amongst total throwaways. It's a shame that most MCs are still blind to the fact that hip-hop albums don't need to be an hour long, but at least Aceyalone leaves off any skits. *Love & Hate* is worth picking up for Aceyalone's great delivery and sense of humor if you're already a fan, but only about third or fourth on the list if you're just starting to feel him out. (DH)

Project Blowed, 4343 Leimart Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90008, www.projectblowed.com

Adams, Keith John - Sunshine Loft, CD

British singer/songwriter with a nice voice writes pure and simple pop songs with influences from '60s psychedelic rock, twee pop and even country and western. Songs on this record range from quiet, acoustic numbers to more upbeat little ditties. I'm sure this would appeal to pop fans everywhere. (KM)

DCBaltimore 2012, 52 Glenville Ave., #1, Allston, MA 02134, www.dcbaltimore2012.com

Altaira - Weigh Your Conscience, CDEP

I really like this CD because it takes me back to a simpler time. Altaira play melodic punk the way it was before MTV got hold of it. Vocals are gruff, while the guitars weave powerful melodies that leave you wanting more. (SJ)

Attention Deficit Disorder Records, PO Box 8240, Tampa, FL 33674, www.addwreckedkids.com

Amazing Larry - My Baby's A Mannequin / Beautiful Noise, 7"

Straightforward pop-punk in the vein of Lookout! circa 1993 without any of the wit or melodies that make those releases such a joy. Something about both of these songs sounds "off," but I can't quite place it. Either way there isn't much to see here. (MS)

Self-released, PO Box 1164, Denver CO 80201, www.amazinglarry.tk

Antelope - Crowns / The Flock, CDEP

Antelope are a side project of the D.C. band El Guapo, whom I've never heard, though we live in the same town. This two-song disc has a post-punk/Q And Not U sound worth investigating. Make a mental note to check the band out live and search out their other music. (DI)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Apers, The - The Wild & Savage Apers, CD

A collection of single/comp tracks (circa 1997-2002) from this fantastically fun pop-punk band from the Netherlands. Although the sound/clarity on some tracks is a bit rudimentary, this is a definite must-have for anyone with a soft spot in their hearts for bands like the Queers, Screaming Weasel, Vindictives, etc. (MG)

Stardumb Records, POB 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, Netherlands, www.stardumbrecords.com

Apollo Up! - Light The End And Burn It Through, CD

Apollo Up! (exclamation point optional) play aggressively poppy three chord stuff. Based out of Nashville, its members slogged it out for nearly a decade in various rock outfits before banding together in 2002, and it shows. Although not particularly complex, the 11 tracks on *Light The End* are blissfully sardonic and bolstered by bursts of heavy noise. (JG)

Theory 8 Records, 1402 Ardee Drive, Laverge, TN 37086-2585, www.theory8records.com

Arkata - Impeding Your Chances Of Success, CDEP

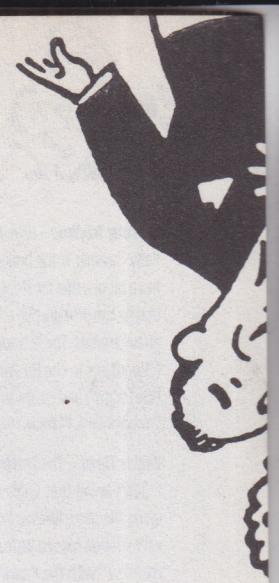
Metallic hardcore out of Ontario, Canada. Tight instrumentation, livid death-metal screams, well-paced and not overly most-focused. This band moves more into the sphere of death metal, which is what makes them sound so much better than most chugalicious metal/hardcore bands. (MG)

Self-released, www.arkata.net

Askeleton - Angry Album Or Psychic songs, CD

This is one of those experimental bands with layers upon layers of drum loops, synthesizers and vocal effects on their records. They touch all types of different styles, but bands like this never come together for me. It just sounds like a mish-mash of ideas. (KM)

Goodnight Records, PO Box 690 Murphy Ave., #B8, Atlanta, GA 30310, www.goodnightrecords.com



At A Loss – A Falling Away From, CD

At A Loss is a Bronx-bred pop-punk outfit with poetry-journal lyrics and a slight edge, except for that pointless piano instrumental halfway through the record. The lead singer is just too whiney for me to take his band seriously as band that "fucking rocks," as a band quote suggests. (EG)

Blackout Records / Temple Recordings, PO Box 610 Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.blackoutrecords.com

Atvin – Night Mute, CD

Solemn indie rock with scarce vocals. When there are vocals, they're fairly quiet and gloomy, but I guess that goes with the theme of this album, an homage to horror film and literature. It's a dark, atmospheric album built less on individual songs than on creating a mood, and I think they've succeeded. (NS)

Secretly Canadian, 1021 S. Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Affront – When Death Won't Kill You, CD

Run of the mill brodeco-style punk complete with backup chants and woo-ohh-ohh's. Musically the band coheres well, but the chugging guitars and contrived angst add up to another drop in the bucket. Yawn. (BM)

Inferno Recordings, www.infernorecordings.com

Albert React – Confluence & Scrapes, CD

Further proof that screamo is the new ska, these third-wavers fumble with the oversaturated formula currently making superstars of every band named after a weekday. Four note melo(drama)dies explode into predictable caterwauls over the same generic Deftone-esque sea shanty. (PS)

Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Amerikan Made – S/T, CD

It's painfully apparent this SoCal punk outfit was largely raised on NOFX, Bad Religion, DI and T.S.O.L. That's cool, though, because they pull off the aggressive, politically aware-and-pissed-youth thing really well. Pat Magrath (ex-Slayer and Fear drummer) is a great, albeit mature addition to this up-and-coming band. (EG)

J Rock Entertainment, 9114 Adams Ave., Ste. 140, Huntington Beach, CA 92646

Anderson, Jason – New England, CD

This is a collaboration with Phil Elvrum of the Microphones. A lot of the songs are piano-driven, but it suits the songs well. The mood is very mellow. Mirah's backing vocals complement everything so well. This is definitely worth your time. (DA)

K Records, PO Box 7154 Olympia, WA 98507 www.krecords.com

Avskum – Punkista, CD

These Swedish punks have been around since the '80s, and their sound influenced bands like His Hero Is Gone and Hippies Of Today, so as you can imagine, they sound very similar to those bands. It's on Prank, and with songs like "The Master And Slave System," you can bet it's political. (KM)

Prank Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-0992, www.prankrecords.com

Azita – Life On The Fly, CD

John McIntire recorded electric piano, bass and drums augmented on some songs by guitar and horns. I have some conflicting feelings about Azita's jazz lounge singer/piano player style. I'm loving the drums, cornet and piano, but then I find the tones of an electric piano flat and cold. (DI)

Drag City Records, PO Box 476867, Chicago IL 60647, www.dragcity.com

Applied Communications – Africa Baby, Yeah Yeah Yeah, CD

Applied Communications is Max Wood's tripped-out electronic barrage of sounds that come together to form some sonic and lyrical gibberish. Although the album is mostly interesting, funny and groove-inducing, it can also be utterly spastic. The 11 tracks on *Africa Baby*...—with such titles as "Boy For Sale" and "Peanut Butter Disco"—range from the calypso-techno-backed former to the absurdity of the latter. He includes everything from Latin beats to robotic blips to horns, not to mention everything in-between. Vocally, Wood's white-boy-talking-rap style of delivery can at times become cartoonish. And with lyrics about matrices and hanging out at Target, he creates some all-out ultra-geeky craziness that can be fun in small doses. (AJA)

Discos Mariscos, 109 NE 11th St., Gainesville, FL 32601, www.discosmariscos.com

Arrogant Sons Of Bitches, The – All The Little Ones Are Rotting, enhanced CDEP

Lively five-song EP from this poppy ska punk band. If that's your bag, you'd do well to check this out; it's a heckuva value with a ton of CD-ROM extras, like over two hours of live MP3s and videos. (JC)

Kill Normal Records, 35 Hidden Meadow Road, Amherst, MA 01002, www.killnormal.com

Ashtray – S/T, 7"

Musically like something from the early '80s when punk and new wave were a little dirty. These four songs that trade off lead vocal duties among the sexes show that female vocals can have just as much attitude as the boys can. (BC)

Self-released, www.ashtraypunks.com

Atombombpocketknife – Lack And Pattern, CD

ABPK returns, matured and sounding better than ever. *Lack And Pattern* carries eight dense tracks of hard-hitting, sophisticated composition. Dissonant, yet barb-hooked melodies, mammoth rhythms, punk undertones, fluid intricacies and impeccable production are all par for the course. While homage is paid to the influential works of Unwound, 90 Day Men and Depeche Mode, new ground is paved as well. It's rare to come across a band that is able to exercise both tightly knit musicianship and originality. Fortunately for your ears and mine, Atombombpocketknife is one of those bands. This recording is an admirable exertion of talent and style. If your faith in independent music needs a little reassurance, give it a listen. (BM)

File 13 Records, PO Box 804868, Chicago, IL 60680, www.file-13.com

Ausgebombt – Hellbomber, 12"

Crusty thrashpunk metal mayhem! Essentially, thrash/speed-metal guitars over a constantly pounding drum and crazy vocals. Definitely a circle-pit inciter. (MG)

Hardcore Holocaust, POB 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CDs, CDRs and vinyl only—so long as they come from a label that isn't owned/partially owned by a major label), but we reserve the right not to review something we feel isn't appropriate for *Punk Planet*. Also, due to the volume we receive, some records fall through the cracks. Feel free to send us your record(s) for review (4229. N. Honore St., Chicago IL 60613), but expect up to a five-month lag time for it to appear in the magazine. So send stuff EARLY, and include any and all contact information. CDRs that aren't advance promo copies from labels end up in our demo section. All reissues are also in their own section. Records marked with a little ear (☞) are "highlighted" reviews, which means reviewers found them especially noteworthy (not necessarily good or bad). Finally, please keep in mind that if you send us your record, we might not like it. The review is merely one person's opinion, written without God's endorsement. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Kyle Ryan at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT CALL the office, as Kyle is not there full-time. Thanks!



☞ **Baby Dayliner – High Heart And Low Estate, CD**

Baby Dayliner is the brainchild of Ethan Marunas, a dude who clearly has a bit of a thin for Stephen Merritt and New Order. Good thing, then, that he can actually pull off a bit of Merritt's swaggering vocals and soft arrangements. The 12 tracks on *High Heart* range from utterly hilarious ("Hoodlums In The Hit Parade") to sweetly demure ("High Heart And Low Estate") and create an utterly enjoyable and listenable album. (JG)
Brassland Records, PO Box 76, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.brassland.org

Babies Three – The Luzhin Defence, CDEP

I didn't know that England had screamo bands! These guys sound along the same lines as Boy Sets Fire. My only real issue with this is a very strange hidden instrumental track that combines Fugazi's "Merchandise" with the Knack's "My Sharona." It works about as well as you think it would. (TK)

Geekscene, 25 Park Place, Margate, Kent, CT9 1LE, UK, www.geekscene.co.uk

Bagheera – Twelves, CD

Asian Man's newest boy/girl band has plenty of vocal and guitar melodies to keep anyone happy. But that's not all, as these two talented peeps from Missouri deliver the rock, and they don't let the pretty stuff override the rocking numbers. Good release! (BC)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Balboa – S/T, CD

A blend of hardcore, screamo, melodic punk and metal makes this band unique. Besides the emotional intensity that conjures the lost days of great emotive hardcore, Balboa utilizes an array of beautiful (and brutal) instrumentation and a strong knowledge of time signatures for a sound that's as complex as it is emotional. (MG)

Forge Again Records, POB 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgeagainrecords.com

Bang! Bang! – Do You Like It?, CD

Cute, peppy and saucy rock 'n' roll/punk with equal injections of bluesy swagger and hip-shaking pop appeal. The vocal stylings are reminiscent of a freak Cramps/B-52's pairing. Definitely a great start for this sexy Chicago threesome. (MG)

Heads Up Records/self-released, 2322 W. Augusta 2R, Chicago, IL 60622, www.bangbangband.com

Banner, The – Your Murder Mixtape, CD

It's that newer school of New York hardcore mixed with metal. The guitars provide crunching riffs and even some dual harmonies, while the vocals scream in that pissed off NY style. These guys can play melodically without losing their heaviness and intensity. (SJ)

Blackout! Records/Brightside Records, 931 Madison St., Hoboken, NJ 07030, www.blackoutrecords.com, www.brightsiderecords.com

Baskervilles – S/T, CD

A great keyboard/bass-driven record. The Television Personalities are a clear influence, as well as *Happy Jack*-style Who and Jerry Harrison's work with Jonathan Richman. The album is highly melodic, simple and interesting. (RL)

Secret Crush Records, PO Box 3648, New York, NY 10163, www.secretcrushrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

Saints, (I'm) Stranded. Well, I will be damned that no one, including myself, has enlightened the virgins to the Saints (*I'm Stranded*). This disc was released in 1977 by a group of Australians that transplanted the sounds of Detroit rock 'n' roll and created a punk sound of their own. The title track, "(I'm) Stranded," is a perfect song, even clocking in at over three-and-a-half minutes—you will sing the chorus upon first listen. The only complaints some have on this record are the two ballads, of which I love one and like the other. The real low point is the long ending track, "Night In Venice." You can also make an argument that their second LP, *Eternally Yours*, is as good if not better. In fact, take those two records, cut out a few tracks, and you have one of the top five records of all time. I guarantee if you have any clue to great rock 'n' roll, you will love "Demolition Girl" and flip over the Saints version of "Kissin' Cousins." There are a bunch of different ways to get this classic record; a few CD versions have different bonus tracks that are worth the hunt. Munster Records also put out a cool 2xLP of Saints tracks awhile back. There is also a CD boxset with the first three albums and bonus tracks too. This is as essential as a record gets.

Last five records on my turntable: The Hatepinks, *Sehr Gut Rock And Roll* (reviewed this issue); Jerry Lee Lewis, *Greatest Show On Earth*; Billy Bragg, *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry*; The Who, *Sell Out*; Black Flag, *Damaged*.

☞ **Beauty Pill – The Unsustainable Lifestyle, CD**

In my personal experience, Dischord Records has been known to produce two types of bands: ones that perpetuate the fine reputation of the now legendary label by reinventing and retooling the phrase "punk"; and bands that use the label's status to pass off their brand of pseudo-intellectual rock as something we should somehow deem relevant. Beauty Pill, who seemed to have made a name for themselves because they feature members of Smart Went Crazy, seem to glaringly belong in the latter category, judging by their debut long player. Listening to these 12 songs quickly became a lesson in patience, as the Beauty Pill's so-called brand of mellow, "smart" punk became trying after only a few tracks. The potential might very well be there, but it doesn't seem worth the aggravation. (MS)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Behind Enemy Lines – The Global Cannibal, CD

Members of Aus Rotten are back with this relevant album, a perfect blend of punk, hardcore and metal licks underneath anger-fueled and intelligent lyrics concerning the current terrible state of affairs in the U.S. (MG)

Antagonym Media, POB 10790, Pittsburgh, PA 15203, www.antagonymedia.com

Big Cats, The – Worrisome Blues, CD

Remember the Gin Blossoms? They're back in indie-rock form. Note: not the actual Gin Blossoms, but a reasonable facsimile. Your mileage may vary. (RR)

Max Recordings, 1109 N. Tyler St., Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

Big World – Happy Birthday, CD

Equal parts Stooges, Kiss and Johnny Thunders, the Big World present their take on the Detroit sound. This is a metal-sounding disc that could be on the soundtrack of any movie when the lead character is misplaced in some small-town biker bar. (EA)

Self-released, www.bigworldband.com

Blithe Sons, The – Arm Of The Starfish, CDEP

The Blithe Sons create deconstructed seascapes on this EP. An instrumental foreplay that never really builds up to anything, the EP is a subdued study of sounds heard in the background: quiet acoustic guitars, barely uttered vocals, feet walking on floorboards and a ship's horn sounding in the distance. (AJA)

Family Vineyard, PO Box 2161, Bloomington, IN 47402, www.family-vineyard.com

Blue Sky Mile – Sands Once Seas, CD

Jeez, even pop punk doesn't produce vocals as annoying as the emo/hardcore genre. The only good thing I can say is that they don't have those cliché screaming backup vocals. And the bass lines are pretty good. Permission to mention Dag Nasty on your promo sheet is revoked. (NS)

Initial, PO Box 17131, Louisville, KY 40217, www.initialrecords.com

Bohren & Der Club Of Gore – Black Earth, CD

Creepy jazz instrumentals that owe a huge debt to Angelo Badalamenti, the composer on most of David Lynch's films. It's the type of music that really needs to be heard in conjunction with some kind of visual stimulus. I'd suggest *Witchcraft Through The Ages*. (AJ)

Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1778, Orinda, CA 94563, www.ipecac.com

Baby Dayliner / Broken Spindles

☞ **Bolides, The – Science Under Pressure, CD**

Robot rock has reared its head a few times in the past few decades: Devo did it right, and Man...Or Astro-Man? did it in a whole new way. The Bolides do a garage robot rock that falls flat. The vocals sound right off of an early Estrus record and don't mix well with the spacey keyboards. Fun reading, cool design and great website. The concept is better than the outcome. (EA)

Dionysus Records, PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507, www.dionysusrecords.com

☞ **Bonnie "Prince" Billy – Sings Greatest Palace Music, CD**

Do record reviewers have journalistic integrity? I'll assume for a minute that we do and come clean. I am unfamiliar with Will Oldham's music. As such, I am unable to compare the versions of the songs on this album with the original versions from earlier in Oldham's career. The entire record consists of rerecordings of previous songs by Oldham with top-notch Nashville studio talent. The result is an entirely credible, well-played, big-time country record reminiscent of the more somber moments of pre-shitty country artists like Merle Haggard and David Allan Coe. Some doubts linger as to Oldham's intentions for rerecording these songs on such a large scale, but the album is too well done, haunting and heartfelt to be a piss-take. (RR)

Palace Records/Drug City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, www.drugcity.com

Books Lie – Hall Of Fame And Fire, CD

Screamed vocals, thrash metal/postpunk guitars...it seems like I've heard a lot of bands using the same formula. I'm sick of hearing singers shrieking unintelligible vocals; I actually want to understand them. There were a few '80s techno-sounding songs mixed in, which made this even harder to listen to. (JJG)

Level Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Boxcar Satan – Upstanding And Indigent, CD

A singer with rasping growl like Tom Waits leads music that incorporates jazz, metal, punk, blues and some other genres. Some unconventional instruments are used, like slide guitar, horns and vibraphone. This reminded me of Scratch Acid, but it's tough to pin down, which keeps them from being another cookie-cutter band. (JJG)

Dog Fingers Recordings, PO Box 2433, San Antonio, TX 78296, www.dogfingers.com

Break The Silence – Near Life Experience, CD

This hardcore record has a neo-Bad Religion feel with the chorus harmonies mixed with some screamo à la Strike Anywhere. Dan Precision (ex-Rise Against and 88 Fingers Louie) is responsible for the band's thunderous guitar work. Overall, the music is tight and calculated, but lyrically, it's sort of a downer. (EG)

Hopeless Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.hopelessrecords.com

Broken Spindles – Fulfilled/Complete, CD

The Faint drummer, Joel Petersen, is the mastermind behind Broken Spindles, an electronic fiasco with some catchy rhythms and pleasurable melodies. But however lovely the music may be, Petersen's deadpan voice and embarrassing lyrics tend to ruin the overall effect with forced bravado. Not enough to interest me. (SP)

Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, www.saddle-creek.com

Bullet Train To Vegas – S/T, 7"

This 7" gives us two songs of heavy rock with pop and emo influences combined with sassy, screamy vocals. You really don't hear a lot of bands doing this sound and even fewer doing it as well as these guys do. Nice, angular melodies kinda like Pretty Girls Make Graves. (KM)
Snakes Snapping At Your Heels, www.dvbe.net/snakesnapping;
Can't Never Could Recordings, www.cncrecords.com

Burn The 8 Track – The Ocean, CD

Their anthemic frenzy fits well in the commercial-rock realm. This is the kind of epic music that makes prepubescent boys weep in a fit of naive passion. You know, those who've stopped throwing temper tantrums over toys and started believing that there's only one chance at young love. (VC)
Abacus Recordings, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250,
www.abacusrecordings.com

C – Universum, CD

An entirely instrumental CD from the Czech Republic. C plays midtempo indie rock mixed with dub and some electronic samples. Called "compost rock" by the band, it is very original in theory. It just doesn't hit me as hard as I had expected. (TK)
Free Dimension, PO Box 35, 39001 Tabor, Czech Republic, www.freedimension.cz

Call Sign Cobra – S/T, 12"

I don't know what the fuck to make of this record. I hate to make band comparisons, but imagine Filth playing with Bob Seger—that's what this sounds like. I'm not quite sure whether it's a joke or not. There's an obvious punk influence in the vocals and some of the music, but then there's this whole classic-rock shtick about them with songs like "The Death Of The Crimson Unicorn." They even have a horn section, which sometimes adds to the music and other times just sounds cluttered. The cover art is exactly like all those old Molly Hatchet albums, with the same barbarian dude. Well, if you want something different or if you just want a good laugh, buy this record. (SJ)
Not Bad Records, PO Box 371292, Denver, CO 80237, www.notbadrecords.com

Career Suicide – Sars EP, 7"

Obnoxious, straight-forward punk record full of untamed and raw youthful energy and absolute disregard for melody. This band would have been a great fit on the Rip-Off Records roster had they just started playing a few years back. I bet they put on a hell of a show. (BN)
Deranged Records, PO Box 543, Station P, Toronto, ON M52 2T1, Canada,
www.derangedrecords.com

Caribbean, The – William Of Orange EP, CDEP

Slow and haunting alt-country-ish stuff. Apparently the record was quite a pain the ass to make (hearing loss, cat fights, stuff like that), but well worth it. The five tracks on *William Of Orange* are beautiful and melodic, but sort of unmemorable. Perhaps a longer album would do them better. (JG)
Hometapes, 2235 SW 27th Terrace, Miami, FL 33133

Catch, Catchperfect – Front And Center EP, CDEP

They sound like a slower, airier, more surreal (i.e., warbly voiced) Fugazi, and like Fugazi, their music has that mysterious emotional

quality where you don't know quite whether to pump your fists or go write in your diary. These four songs are over before you've even begun to digest them. (DAL)

Self-released, www.catchcatchperfect.com

Catholic Boys – Psychic Voodoo Mind Control, CD

The Catholic Boys play fast, punchy, dirty punk 'n' roll like a faster Electric Frankenstein or an underproduced Hives. The make-up shtick could be a bit much, but I think it sort of works. This record wound up giving me a headache, but in the best way possible. (MS)
Trick Knee Productions, PO Box 12714, Green Bay WI 54307,
www.grunnenrocks.nl/label/t/trickkneeproductions.htm

Caulfield / Mumbler / The Gibbons / Megan Kott – The War On Terrorism, 7"

The War On Terrorism is a commendable effort with unfortunately insipid results. With the exception of electric folk-punk artist Megan Kott, this is a rather formulaic oi compilation. It comes complete with breakneck chord changes, awkward lyrics and references to such infamous political figures as Bush and Diem. (RL)
Salinas Records, PO Box 20996, Ferndale, MI 48220, www.salinasrecords.cjb.net

Central City Transmission – Incommunicado, CDEP

Damn, I didn't expect this from the artsy cover art. This is some extremely well-written, garagey post-punk type stuff. It's fronted by soothing male/female vocals that, at times, come together for some great harmonies. The guitars are clean and full of reverb. There is a keyboard layered nicely. I can pick up on a touch of Television and a little Psychedelic Furs influences, and I read that they have been compared to the Modern Lovers. Any way you look at it, this is a quality recording, and I am excitedly waiting for their full length. Very impressive. (TK)
Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836, www.kapowrecords.com

Cerebrus Shoal – Bastion Of Itchy Preeves, CD

The new Cerebrus Shoal record is actually old. This album was created in 2000 and showcases the band's "simpler" side. While the album opens disappointingly, the majority of tracks are sure to get you saying, "Is this the accompanying music to a Dame Darcy comic?" Surprising and a little insane. (SP)
North East Indie, PO Box 10315, Portland, ME 04104-0315, www.northeastindie.com

Cheaters Club, The – A Week In The Life Of The Cheaters Club, CDEP

Semi-electronic, painful songs about the singer's obsession with some girl. His voice is so low that he sounds as if he's on his deathbed. If you enjoy despairing music, then you might enjoy this. (SJ)
Self-released, 8 Norton Ct, Easthampton, MA 01027, www.purevolume.com/thecheatersclub

Chester Copperpot – The Kings Of Kirby, CD

Coming from big umlaut country, Chester Copperpot—no one in the band's real name, by the way—got together to play music 14 years ago so they had something to do while tipping back a beer or eight. All the time and all the beer could explain the knack for melodies and the Friday-night feel to all of the catchy tunes of *The Kings Of Kirby*. There

are no dry spots on this album that tackles the details of a thong-ram-pant barbeque party, the spores on the food in singer Fredrik Carlssons' parent's fridge and an overdue make-out session. (SM)
Popkid Records, www.popkid.com

Cheval De Frise – Fresques Sur Les Parois Secretes Du Crane, CD

Instrumental French two piece composed of drums and acoustic guitar. The songs are really technical. It sounds like it would be fun live, but on record it all blends together. Fits well as background music. (DA)
Frenetic Records, PO Box 640434 San Francisco, CA 94164-0434, www.freneticrecords.com

Chillout – 41.56, CD

Solid post-hardcore. Sometimes they're a little groovy, sometimes slow, and sometimes they pick up the pace for some catchy numbers. Lots of nice, intricate guitar work that isn't just saved for the slow parts. Over everything are great vocals and backups. They'd definitely be bigger if they were from the U.S. (NS)
Self-released, CLARA Yann, Arselin, 82360 Lamagistère, France, chill.out@wanadoo.fr

Chubby – Is It Time?, CD

Chubby features the former trombone player for the Mighty Mighty Bosstones on vocals/guitar. I'm not a big Bosstones fan, but I would take that any day over this slickly produced rock/punk. Emphasis on rock. (DA)
Gigantic Music, 59 Franklin St. Suite #403 New York, NY 10013, www.giganticmusic.com

Circle Takes The Square – As The Roots Undo, CD

Circle Takes The Square's paranoid, ominous lyrics are matched by the urgency of the frantic guitar, venomous bass lines and the call-and-response growls and hollers of the male/female vocals. A good experiment in deconstructionist anger management. (CC)
Robotic Empire, PO Box 421, Richmond, VA 23220, www.roboticempire.com

Clark, Annie – Rats Live On No Evil Star, CDEP

Avant-folk-rock driven by Annie Clark's vocals, which are sometimes desperate, sometimes reminiscent of Annie Lennox and sometimes sound like a high-pitched hovering aircraft. But the changes in pitch and tone in Clark's voice aren't enough to unite the slowly paced and scattered song structures that need some pulling together. (AJA)
Self-released, www.anniedark.net

Colonists, The – Some Kind Of Dwellers In Some Kind Of Colony, CD

The Colonists waver between playing upbeat, indie-pop songs and mellow '60s rock reminiscent at times of the Velvet Underground. The album dragged a bit toward its end; I think because it began with their strongest song, "Albert," a head-bopper that should have set the pace for the entire record. (AJA)
Chord & Pedal, www.chordandpedal.com

Conation – Troubled Waters And Fortresses, CD

The adage says you can't judge a book by its cover, but who hasn't done that when CD browsing? Conation's cover art is baby blue with frilly fonts and flowers, but make no mistake, it's hardcore, juxtaposed with lovely female vocals and occasional violins. Definitely more than meets the eye. (EG)
Building Records, 21/10 Boulton St., Nth Adelaide, S.A., 5006 Australia

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

Julie Ruin, S/T. In every good cliché teen film, a requisite scene never fails to unfold during the first act: Teen-girl protagonist dances like no one is watching. Arms flail, a torso spins, her eyes are closed as she shakes away with careless abandonment—and she's actually listening to this record. It's infectious, self-righteous, born in the aftermath of Bikini Kill and the precursor to Le Tigre. It's Kathleen Hanna, alone in her apartment with headphones strapped to her head, crooning like no one's listening. She sweats out subtle lo-fi anthems with lines like "I say, I say, an intellectual genie/ I'm makin' bullshit disappear like I'm Hou-fuckin'-dini" ("V.G.I."). For the most part, it's a solo show with Kathleen on all instruments accompanying her bittersweet voice. Julie Ruin writes undeniable pop songs that ricochet inside your skull, indoctrinating you into the Valley Girl Intelligentsia. Mz. Hanna doesn't disappoint with the seething ("Aerobicide," "I Wanna Know What Love Is") and absurd condemnations ("Crochet"). The lone pure love song, "Stay Monkey," is so tender it's almost heartbreaking. Kathleen's personal is political and vice versa; she swims effortlessly between both points within her scope. She's come a long way, baby.

I'll Huff and Puff and Blow Your Ears Out: Burnside Project, *The Networks, The Circuits, The Streams, The Harmonies, Jawbreaker, 24 Hour Revenge Therapy*; The Robot Ate Me, *On Vacation* (reviewed this issue); Fur Cups For Teeth, *Allergic 2 Teeth* (reviewed this issue).

**Cordero – Somos Cordero, CD**

One of the coolest bands I've reviewed, due to sheer musical ability and the festive Latin flair. The lead singer, a real Cordero herself, sings Spanish tunes that flicker with color and energy. Although the English tracks aren't bad, the Spanish ones are the real tops. Check out the blissful "Abuelita." (SP)

Daemon Records, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308, www.daemonrecords.com

Coulter – Call & Response, 7"

This here 7-inch is good enough to warrant its own genre: yelpcore. The tuneage doesn't give in to the gloom of the tortured squeals, instead going the way of cool, anthemic riffs. All with a perfect lo-fi crackle. I think I might put b-side, "fuck! fuck! fuck!", on my answering machine. (DAL)

Stickfigure Records, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308, www.stickfigurerecords.com

Crayon Rosary – S/T, CDEP

Crayon Rosary's aim toward whimsical, endearing pop with those precocious off-kilter harmonies laid over dulcet, acoustic guitars might be more difficult than they imagined. Their harmonies aren't off-kilter so much as they're just plain off. This EP misses the mark, but hits on a ho-hum knockoff. (CC)

XOXO Records, 162 Prospect Ave. Floor 2, Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.xoxorecords.com

Crionics – Human Error (Ways To Self Destruction), CD

Polish black metal with a death-metal attitude, Crionics are one more reason to cut the Polish jokes right now. Thick production helps achieve a heavy sound that most black-metal bands lack. While I'm not always a big fan of the synthesizer, it's used here well enough to be tolerable. (DH)

Candlelight USA, 707 Plymouth, Meeting, PA 19662, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Crime In Choir – The Hoop, CD

Often instrumental music can be boring and tedious to listen to, though that's not the case with Crime In Choir's second CD, *The Hoop*. The music is lush and orchestrated with plenty of keyboards and guitars, as ethereal fragments of sound dance in and around the music. Don't get the wrong impression, though: This is no sleepy-time music. There's more than enough energy in the songs to keep your attention. Tempo changes help get rid of any possible monotony that could arise out of music devoid of words. These guys do an excellent job of keeping things interesting without being pretentious, something often associated with prog. (SJ)

Frenetic Records, PO Box 640434, San Francisco, CA 94164, www.freneticrecords.com

Crime In Stereo – Explosives And The Will To Use Them, CD

Above-average, modern hardcore that sounds like Strike Anywhere and Avail singing about girl troubles instead of political woes. The production is pretty slick, but Crime In Stereo definitely seems like a band that would gain, not lose something, from a more professional recording. Nothing mind-blowing, but it's at least worth a listen. (MS)

Blackout! Records, 931 Madison St., Hoboken NJ 07030, www.blackoutrecords.com

Crowpath – Old Cuts And Blunt Knives, CD

Listening to Crowpath is like bashing your head into a brick wall. These Swedes must be fucking crazy! This is the single most brutal record I have ever listened to. On one hand, the music is insanely technical,

sounding a little like Discordance Axis or Creation is Crucifixion. On the other hand, the whole thing is mixed so well that, even with so much going on, you can hear all the instruments near perfectly. It just leveled me back into my seat. I guess that is due in part to the excellent remastering efforts of Scott Hull of Pig Destroyer, who has worked with bands such as Dying Fetus and Voivod. Get this CD, and you will be blown away. (TK)

Robotic Empire, PO Box 4211, Richmond, VA 23200, www.roboticempire.com

Cut-Offs, The – Fat, Drunk And Angry, CD

How is it that some bands can take the basic punk rock equation—snarling guitars, fast and catchy songs, gravelly vocals—and make it work while others fuck it up beyond all belief? I don't know the answer, but these guys do. They got it right. (RR)

Self-released, www.thecut-offs.com

Days Like These – Charity Burns Green., CD

Powerful, hard-hitting emo-rock with rhyming, repetitive lyrics and lots of palm-muting. Days Like These, though, succumbs to the stereotypical genre pitfalls: heavy choruses, melodic breakdowns, lots of songs dramatizing what it means to be in love, etc. Notice the dots between the album title for extra emotional effect. (MS)

Lobster Records, PO Box 1473, Santa Barbara CA 93102, www.jobsterrecords.com

Dead And Buried – The Company I Keep, CD

I kind of wish I knew people who were into bands like Dead And Buried. I could get advice from them to help me purge my soul's blistering hatred and use my unorthodox, asphalted throat. Just my luck, everyone I know likes Hall & Oates, not these candidates for court-ordered anger-management classes. (SM)

Spook City Records, PO Box 34891, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.spookcityusa.com

Dead Hate The Living, The – Take That, World!, 7"

This is a hardcore binge if ever there was one. Plenty-o-metal guitars, growling vox juxtaposed by some melodic singing, mostly about socio-political strife. (EG)

Self-released, PO Box 19151, Cincinnati, OH 45219, www.thedeathattheliving.com

Death Comet Crew – This Is Rhipop, CD

The sweltering heat of an NYC summer is enough to make you schizophrenic. The steam rising from subway grates and the drip of air conditioner spit falling on your head like acid rain. But beneath it all, at least in the summers that marked the ferocious beginning of the decade of greed and frustration that was the '80s, was the smell of overheated bodies dancing, coming alive and releasing a winter's worth of self-medicating drinking. The soundtrack: Death Comet Crew. *This Is Rhipop*, the complete discography of these hip-hop pioneers, takes you there. Included is their groundbreaking 1984 12" *At The Marble Bar*, which features experimental layering of no-wave noise and instrumentation and the guttural, driving sound and sensibility of punk jammed into and around looped bass, breakbeats and sound bites. A capsule of DCC's welded style that captures a time when those genres fueled each other. (CC)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Decahedron – Disconnection Imminent, CD

A rock band of varying sorts, Decahedron blends Dischord/D.C.-style punk stylistics, indie-rock smoothness and electronic manipulation/experimentation to produce an interesting and eclectic sound. Difficult to explain, but definitely recommended. (MG)

Lovitt Records, PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210, www.lovitt.com

Decomposure – Taking Things Apart, CD

Caleb Mueller makes sounds seem amusing, complex and most notably, important. He's the Herbie Hancock of the new millennium. Blips and bleeps are added to "Speech," Bush's post-9/11 State of the Union speech. The album is a testament that one kid with a computer and an imagination can rip it up. (EG)

Unschool Records, 1289 N. Fordham Blvd., Ste. 222, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.unschoolcd.com

Deeble, Robert – Thirteen Stories, CD

This Lou Reed impersonator/knockoff artist will probably either compel or annoy most people. *Thirteen Stories* plays like parody of Reed's *New York* album, and even though it's hilarious, the songs are undeniably catchy. Straining to sound as much like Reed as possible, Deeble's result is anything but dull. (AE)

Pete Records, 244 Grand Ave., Long Beach, CA 90803, www.peterrecords.com; Fractured Discs, www.fractured-discs.com

D.E.K. – Right Now In A Minute, CD

From garage-type hardcore to '50s-style doo-wap hardcore near the end, D.E.K. rips through song after song in this release. The production quality stumbles at times, but for this "don't give a shit punk" style, does it really matter? (BC)

Broken Bones Records, www.brokenbonesrecords.com

Delorax – Blue Light/Magic Mirror, 7"

Clear blue vinyl with post-hardcore/post-emo and lots of changes in tempo and volume. It can be too much when it turns into a jam session. Punk vocals roughen up the music a bit and add some dimension to guitars and drums, which drive aimlessly through each song. (AJA)

Greyday Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208-2086, www.greydayproductions.com

Denovo – S/T, 7"

This is a pretty groovy release. There are only three songs (all on both 7" and CD format), but they sure pack a punch. The first song starts with some heavy, Helmet-type riffing and a fluid bass line before erupting into more upbeat, intricate guitar work. The singer has a kind of melodic, passive voice that evens out a little of the chaos working behind him. Their second song is more of a straight-ahead indie rocker, but not simple by any means—just a little bouncier with more guitar hooks. Denova's final song is a cover of Peter Gabriel's "Digging In The Dirt" that suits their eclectic style. This song is a little more subdued than the rest, but it showcases more of their twin guitar interplay. If you're into the musical stylings of Jawbox, Q And Not U or ATDI (but way less annoying), then this is definitely a band to watch out for. (NS)

We Want Action, 1510 Runaway Bay Drive, #2B, Columbus, OH 43204, www.wewantaction.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

Turning Point, 1988-1991. Without Turning Point, there might not be a Jade Tree Records. This is the band that inspired Darren Walters to start a label. Granted, the early Turning Point stuff really isn't anything special, but it was a starting point. I got my introduction to Turning Point on unfortunate terms. When my friend's band came through Milwaukee in the summer of 2002, he mentioned how the singer of Turning Point had died of a drug overdose earlier that year. It's not a big deal to me when people "lose the edge," but when they fall that far, it's really sad. Not too long after that show, I heard Turning Point for the first time. Their early 7" and demo are pretty basic youth-crew hardcore, with annoying Ray of Today vocals. But with *It's Always Darkest Before The Dawn*, they have a masterpiece. It's hardcore, but it's melodic. Skip's vocals are no longer Cappo-like. The breakdowns make me want to get up and dance, and I'm a pretty reserved guy. The lyrics are introspective and thought-provoking, and it only gets better from there. The version of Ignition's "Anxiety Asking" stands up well to the stellar original. Every time I listen to Turning Point, I feel as excited as I did the first time I heard them. Rest in peace, Skip.

On my stereo: Apologetics, *Unreleased Album*; Holy Shit!, *What the Fuck?!*; Pitchblende, *Au Jus*; Reason To Believe, *When Reason Sleeps Demons Dance*; Ryan Adams, *Rock N Roll*.

Deerhoof / the Dt's

Deerhoof – Milk Man, CD

I was quite obsessed with Deerhoof from the first time I heard them (the *Holdypaws* album). I listened to their eccentric, off-kilter, bizarre music all the time, always assuming that I was the only one. They were one of those bands that felt like you were the only one in the whole world that listened to them. But a funny thing happened between then and now. A few more albums down the line and all of a sudden it feels like everyone (well, everyone not listening to Justin Timberlake, I suppose) is listening to Deerhoof. Just like the newfound indie popularity of TV on the Radio, the success of Deerhoof is proof that sometimes even the insular world of independent rock is looking for something new. It probably helps that *Milk Man* is both Deerhoof's most accessible and best album—a record that tempers the band's blinky-blunk vocals and staccato guitar riffs with dreamy, lush production and danceable beats. In the process, nothing that made the band so charming to begin with was lost: the same bizarro-world vocals (“Sun far away / Go into the rocket / And see if it's brighter”), the same bleating guitar riffs, the same crazy syncopation. It's not for everyone but if you're smart, it's for you. (DS)

5 Rue Christine PO Box 1190 Olympia WA 98507

Desa / Howards Alias – split, CDEP

In the oversaturated sea of post-punk, Desa stays afloat. Strong vocals and somewhat inventive guitar and bass arrangements give promise to this developing band. Howards Alias is a ska-punk band who didn't have the courage to kick out the horn section when their tastes broadened out of the genre. (BM)

Good Clean Fun Records, 48 Cardiff Road, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA61 2QN, UK, www.goodcleanfunrecords.co.uk

Descendents – Cool To Be You, CD

If you do something long enough, more than likely you'll eventually question yourself when it comes to judging the quality of the endeavor. In my case, it's listening to Descendents records. I've loved them long enough that I start to wonder if I can effectively gauge the caliber of new material by the band. However, with the long gaps between records (including All records) and the ever-growing number of bands attempting to cop the Descendents and failing miserably, a poor effort would immediately be obvious. Thankfully, I can confidently say they still have it. While a few of their sonic signatures are missing (short, fast songs and weirder songs) the poppy punk with humongous hooks the band is known for are all over this record. “Nothing With You” will be a big alt-rock radio hit by the time this prints, or modern radio is even more fucked than previously thought possible. “Mass Nerd” is a celebration of the joys of nerdism in the tradition of “Hurtin’ Crue,” and “Blast Off” picks up and drops bombs where “Enjoy” left off. It's safe to say the next studio album in 2011 or so will have a lot to measure up to. (RR)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, www.fatwreck.com

Destiny – The Tracy Chapter, CD

I've heard a lot of intense HC/metal music trying to do something different lately, but this is one record that really grabbed my attention.

Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Murder City Devils, *Empty Bottles*, *Broken Hearts*. This record captures the Murder City Devils at their best. They had fine-tuned the drunken rock 'n' roll mayhem of the first album into a sound that was distinctly their own. Still loud and drunk, but more artfully articulated—if that's not an oxy moron. Every song on this album makes you want to swing your hips, getting nice and drunk and sweaty. “Ready For More,” “Left Hand Right Hand” and “Dear Hearts” are some of the best songs they've ever written, rolling out Spencer Moody's crooked, wasted howl, Coady Willis' impaling drum beats and the macabre keyboard lines that sound as if they were lifted from some 1920s horror flick. Giving the Murder City Devils an edge on rock 'n' roll with a preoccupation with the gruesome, the gore complex carried itself onto the next album with its unsettling blood-and-guts artwork. But starting with *Empty Bottles*, MCD made it clear that there was no identity crisis going on—from the songs to the music to the live show. (I haven't had as much fun at a show since they broke up.) Everything fit so perfectly together and created some horribly exciting rock and roll.

Dancing and destruction: Danzig; !!!, S/T; Deerhoof, *Milkman*; Erase Errata, *At Crystal Palace*; Ssion, *Opportunity Bless My Soul*.

Take some furious vocals, aggressive guitar and wicked beating drums, then throw in some emo-sounding vocals and rhythm guitar with an occasional acoustic guitar. (DI)

Lifelorce Records, PO Box 938, 09009 Chemnitz, Germany, www.lifelorcerecords.com

Destroyer – Your Blues, CD

On “It's Gonna Take An Airplane,” Daniel Bejar sings, “Submarines don't mind spending their time in the ocean.” The former New Pornographer could be one of those submarines. It would be a clean way of figuring out how his latest album stays beautifully distant from anything already committed to magnetic tape and silvery plastic. Only an inescapable, though self-dreamed entrapment, free from the rotating influences of modern culture, could have fostered the kind of diverse and untampered work attained on *Your Blues*. Each new track is exceptionally striking in its unfamiliarity. Bejar links the storytelling of The Decemberists' Colin Meloy with the vibe of something off of *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, cursorily applied with his distinctive finger-painting. He has proven that he doesn't need a support group to make amazing music. Spiral Stairs could learn a lot from Bejar. (SM)

Merge Records, PO Box 1235, Chapel Hill, NC 27514, www.mergerecords.com

Destruction Unit – Self Destruction Of A Man, CD

Listening to this on a Sunday morning as I nursed a hangover incurred at the previous night's Lost Sounds show, I thought at first that my brain had broken. The only thing I could think of to describe this disc was that it sounded like listening to Lost Sounds with a hangover. I found myself wondering if every band I heard from then on would sound like that. It was a scary thought, but my fears were allayed when I checked the liner notes and realized that two thirds of Destruction Unit are none other than Jay and Alicia from Lost Sounds. What a relief! The third member/main man is Ryan of the Wongs, and together this combo raises a racket of noisy, angry rock that is synth-driven and brutally punk. After repeated listens, I've realized that my brain being broken like this might not be such a bad thing after all. (JC)

Empty Records US, PO Box 12301, Portland, OR 97212, www.emptyrecords.com

Deverova Chyba – Do Stran, CD

Hailing from the Czech Republic, Devereova Chyba play a very progressive type of math rock. The lineup is two bassists and a drummer, which creates a uniquely heavy sound. “Lieutenant Colonel Fridge” brings early Primus to mind. (SJ)

Free Dimension Records, PO Box 35, 390 01 Tabor, Czech Republic, www.freedimension.cz

Devilinside – Prelude, CDEP

Ex-Disembodied dish out some tough and barely contained hardcore à la Turmoil. Not bad for a start, and I look forward to the full-length. At only four songs, it's a perfect sampling of hopefully good things to come. (DH)

Abacus Recordings, 2323 W. El Segundo Road, Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.abacusrecordings.com

Diplomat – The Divine And The Impure, CDEP

The first song bursts out with anguished vocals and a dual-guitar attack reminiscent of the Treepeople. The second song follows suit,

but the other three songs head a little more into Bush-like alternative. Still, those first two songs make me want to hear more from these Aussie rockers. (NS)

NiceNoise, PO Box 1032, Glenelg South SA 5045, Australia, www.nicenoise.com.au

Disaster Strikes – Anthrax On The Dance Floor, CDEP

Four songs by a band that sounds like two bands. The first track sounds kind of like power violence stuff, but the rest of the tracks have more of an old-school punk sound, like DC in the mid-'80s. There are some great break downs, more melodic but crunchy parts, multiple folks singing, the back-up crew parts. This band does it all as well share a political outlook with hopes of change instead of the same “smash the state” message that has been done before. Not that these guys sound like Avail, but they have a really similar energy, and I kind of got excited about Disaster Strikes like I did the first time I heard Avail. Only problem: four songs. Check it out and show some Boston love. (DM)

Self-released, www.disasterstrikes.net

Distance, The – Your Closest Enemies, CDEP

With Victory intent on making big bucks on the emo trend, it seems that Bridge Nine is poised to take over as one of the premier hardcore labels around. This release reinforces that, with its blistering melodies, pained, screamed vocals and the brutal sound explosion when the two meet. (BN)

Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

Division Of Laura Lee – Das Not Compute, CD

This is so good. I wish I would have checked out this band the last couple of times I heard about them. It's like taking all the good things about '60s rock, pop and garage, plus '90s indie rock, then molding it all together to create incredibly catchy rock songs. Apparently, these guys are famous in Sweden and with good reason. It's danceable, it's hip, and it grooves like few releases I've heard lately. Everything is top-quality rock with smooth vocals and a drop of dark (goth) just to make it that much more cool. I just hope I don't hear these songs on some car commercial next year. (KM)

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Drapes, The – Swollen, CD

Contrary to what the onesheet says, this is too produced to be considered gritty. The music is bluesy garage rock. Well played, but it didn't move me. (DA)

Orange Recordings, www.orangerecordings.com

Drogues, The – Squall/Holler, CDEP

Songs about drunks, shipwrecked ghosts and vice presidential robots? I can get behind that! Clearly influenced by The Replacements and FIREHOSE (well, they thank Mike Watt and D. Boon for inspiration in the liner notes), The Drogues' debut EP is a good listen, full of nostalgic hooks and catchy choruses. (JG)

Waxbrain Records/self-released, 1220 Irwin St. #14, San Rafael, CA 94901, www.thedrogues.com

Dt's, The – Hard Fixed, CD

Bellingham, Wash.'s The Dt's play a habit-forming hard rock/blues hybrid. A cut above thanks to the soulful howlin' of lead vocalist, Diana



Young-Blanchard, the band carries on in the heartbroken blues tradition. *Hard Fixed* is as comforting as the whiskey that lines this CD. (RL)
Estrus Records, PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227, www.estrus.com

Dykehouse – Midrange, CD

Sounds kind of like UK '80s pop with a fuzziness to Mr. Mike Dykehouse's strong vocals. Keyboards and extremely poppy guitars give way to bland lyrics. Boring and not anything as wonderful as the listener expects Dykehouse feels while crooning. (SP)
Ghostly International, 202 E. Washington, #510, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, www.ghostly.com

East Bay Chasers – It Came From..., 7"

Like a sucker punch to the ribs, this hits you hard and fast. The East Bay boys and girl bring you straight-ahead, beer-fueled rock 'n' roll in this two-song 7". (BC)
Five And Dime Records, PO Box 23441, Oakland, CA 94623, www.fiveanddime.com

Ee – Ramadan, CD

My iMac calls this stuff "new age," but I think it's just a supermellow, dreamy brand of emo. "Wrong Song" is a little more edgy with distorted vox and Braid-esque guitars. "One Less Year" is almost Modest Mouse-y. The album seems to get better with each song. (EG)
Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Elyasin – Two More Days Of Pain, CD

Two More Days Of Pain is a hardcore record with a lot of potential. Musically, this record is explosive. Unfortunately, it lacks a little in the vocal/lyric department. Too bad. (RL)
Grave 9 Records, PO Box 27577, Tempe, AZ 85285, www.gravene.com

Eleven Eleven – Head, CD

Well-intentioned rock music, but ultimately lacking and generic. EE's sonic guitars wail and showcases their musical competency, but overall its somber vocals and tired melodies are forgettable. (AA)
Forever Records/self-released, 296 Deborah Court, Vineland, NJ 08361, www.elevenelevencd.com

End, The – Within Dividia, CD

More insane tech-metal from these crazy bastards. A powerful and more focused follow-up to their Relapse debut, The End create music that seems like it could fall apart at any moment, but never does. Instead, it attacks with specific pressure points in mind, making you wonder if you have any defense. (DH)
Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Eskimo – The Senses, 12"

I really enjoyed Eskimo's first 12", *The Substitution*, and find this new electronica recording equally refreshing. There are actually nine songs here, even if they are instrumentals, you will find some vocal effects too. I like the drums and other tape loops. (DI)
Lost and Found Records, www.lostandfoundrecords.co.uk

Reviewer Spotlight: Jay Castaldi (JC)

Didjits, *Hornet Piñata*. I was the music director at my high school radio station when Touch & Go sent us the second Didjits album, *Hey Judester*. This was the late '80s, a pretty dire time for punk rock. I remember getting a lot of generic "crossover" records around that time. In that context, the Didjits were a breath of fresh pot smoke, bringing the rock 'n' roll back to punk rock. But what immediately won me over was that these were guys from Nowheresville, Ill. The lyrics conveyed to me the true feelings of being a bored teenager stuck in a small Midwestern town with nothing to do, which is exactly how I felt at the time. *Hornet Piñata* was their third record, and it's always been my favorite. Singer/guitarist/songwriter Rick Sims hits his stride here, and though he'd probably scoff at the comparison, he comes off like a Midwestern Ray Davies. The songs tell stories about his surroundings, with vivid and well-developed characters. There's the drag-racing mechanic who "always busts his knuckles when he's wrenchin' up his shit." There's the dude who hides dope in his wooden leg. There's "Cutting Carol," who'll die with a smile on her face and a tattoo that says "fuck you." The music is completely kickass: fast, catchy, dirty punk rock that predated a lot of bands that would become much more popular a few years later. But nobody's ever come close to the greatness of the Didjits and particularly not *Hornet Piñata*.

Five killers: Broadcast Oblivion, *Transmita Olvido*; DMZ, *S/T reissue*; Mexican Cheerleader, *Kings And Kings' Hoots*; The Ponys, *Laced With Romance*; Tyrades, "I Am Homicide '77".

Eternals, The – Out Of Proportion, CD

This crew of musical alchemists (ex. Tortoise, Trenchmouth) takes the base elements of reggae (organ, heavy-lidded bass, metered vocal delivery) and infuses the synth, samples and paranoia of their stellar song-structure sensibilities. Killer dance music for post-rockers. (CC)
Antifaz, PMB201, 202A Calle San Justo, San Juan, PR 00901, www.antifaz.com

Evaporators, The – Ripple Rock, CD

Once I got over the fact that this band is from my arch-nemesis country Canada (they think they're *sooooo* much better than us), I enjoyed this record. A funny, sweet little pop-punk record, replete with odes to cheese, treadmills and, uh, getting rashes. (JG)
Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.alternativetentacles.com

Even Lower / Ambivalent – split, CD

Nothing of interest here. Even Lower plays mediocre (at best) pop punk, while Ambivalent plays subpar hardcore. Next. (RL)
Broken Bone Records, www.brokenbonezrecords.com

Evening – Other Victorians, CD

Lookout Records, apparently trying to branch out with artier fare, brings us this very strange dance-rock release. It has a New York vibe, some slight new wave influences and a *lot* of different instruments (both "real" and electronic). (AE)
Lookout! Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Evergreen Terrace – Writers Block, CD

A covers album from this uber-melodic hardcore band (think Indecision, Thrice, etc.). That's normally not my cup of tea, but the chugging version of Michael Sambello's '80s hit "Mania" is too much. Hilarious hardcore versions of songs by Smashing Pumpkins, U2, NOFX, Tears For Fears, Hum and more. Plus, one original. (MG)
Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Exfork – A Cure For The Disease Called Man..., 10"

Damn this is really impressive. Dark, droning slow to midtempo hardcore that is more original than I can make it sound in a review. The best aspect of the music has to be the drums, which just happen to be played by Mike Felix of Toys That Kill. Highly Recommended. (TK)
GC Records, PO Box 3806, Fullerton, CA 92834, www.gcrecords.com

External Menace – The Process Of Elimination, CD

This is the first U.S. release from this long-running (since '79!) and long-suffering Scottish street-punk band. If you're prone to pinning patches on your over-studded leather and stretching giant holes in your earlobes, this is for you. (JC)
Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

Eye-dea & Abilities – E&A, CD

MC Eye-dea and DJ Abilities' first effort (2001's *First Born*) was a major let-down to many. Eye-dea had previously built a reputation on his amazing knack for freestyling, so when the album dropped with more introspection than battle rhymes, critics and fans immediately looked ahead to a

sophomore release, citing *First Born* as musical training wheels of steel. 2002 brought *Oliver Hart*, a record produced and written entirely by Eye-dea. It was met with much praise, but missed the obvious Abilities influence. 2004 finds the duo with much to brag about and no reservations in doing so. The title of the record sums it up perfectly. One moment you're marveling at Eye-dea's brilliant mic skills and the next awed by Abilities', uh, ability, to live up to his name. A record that's more Eric B. and Rakim than Company Flow, this release shows this duo obviously at their peak together, but I wouldn't want to fight any of Voltron's lions separately, if you know what I mean. This record serves not only as a triumphant return to the basics of MC and DJ, but as a death certificate to crews with too many members and not enough talent to go around. (DH)
Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com; Rhymesayers Entertainment, www.rhymesayers.com

Faction Of The Fox – S/T, CDEP

This is an odd hip-hop EP. The production sounds like something the Beatnuts or Prince Paul would create, with unique music and goofy little samples. The lyrical delivery is kind of irate, pass-the-mic style, like *License To Ill*-era Beastie Boys, but with a little more venom. Interesting. (NS)
Quincy Shanks, PO Box 3035, St. Charles, IL 60174, www.quincyschanks.com

Faux, The / Plunge Into Death – split, 7"

The Faux plays one of those Joy Division-type songs that you can't figure out if it supposed to be played at 45 or 33.3 RPM. Plunge Into Death takes Ciccone Youth and Linn drum programming one step further with a "Green Light" sample from Sonic Youth's *Evo* and adds some Miami bass drums and rapping. (DI)
Mister Records, 199 South Street #5, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, www.misterrecords.com

Feud – Battling Bastards Of Freedom, CD

First off, let's get the negativity out of the way. The recording is straight-up shit. When the guitars are palm-muted and the kick drum lands on the same beat, it feels like I have plungers attached to both ears, and I am getting my brain sucked out. I feel dizzy right now just listening to it. All right, that had to be said. Now on to the positive: This is a great band, crazy, energetic and straightedge. The lyrics are political and well thought out (at least the ones in English). I don't know much about Philippine thrash, but this has to be some of the best. If only they spent more time on the recording, this could be a classic. (TK)
T4C, PO Box 3900, CPO Manila 1000, Philippines, getintouchxxx@yahoo.com

Fire Divine – It's All A Blur, CDEP

It's hard to pinpoint a band's essence in four songs, but it's safe to say this one definitely dabbles in punk and emocore, indicative of early Braid. (EG)
Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com

Firebird Suite, The – Archives 1996-1998, CD

While Braid thunderously took over the era of emo-lite, the "YEAH" guitarist had another project on the back burner. While the mathier

Fixed Idea / the Good Life

Firebird Project/Suite never garnered the attention Hey Mercedes did, they released a couple of records. With this retrospective of early work, I question what warrants such premature posterity. (VC)
Lucid Records Chicago, 665 Timber Hill Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

Fixed Idea – Traditions Of My Addictions, CD

I struggle with Fixed Idea's image of being an out-of-control junkie reflected in the corny cover illustration. It bothers me mostly because this punk/ska band à la Slapstick, Buck-O-Nine and early Jump Up releases has some musical strengths. Notably, the instrumentals are quite strong. Note to band: brand yourself better. (EG)
Broken Bone Records, www.brokenbonerecords.com

Flatus – Crashing Down, CD

Well-written, high-energy rock tunes with the standout track being "Radio Hit," in which the band sings about the current state of music. The only drawback is where maybe the guy oversings a little, like Meatloaf, but that doesn't take away too much from the loud guitar sound. (BC)
Black Pumpkin Records, PO Box 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377, www.blackpumpkin.com

Foamers, The – S/T, CD

This is the reason I hate the term "punk rock" these days. These boys sound so textbook MTV/mall punk that I feel bad for today's kids. Don't make me name the 500 records that you should own before thinking of picking up anything like this. (EA)
Household Name Records, PO Box 12286, London SW9 6FE, UK, www.householdnamerecords.co.uk

For Stars – It Falls Apart, CD

A record that both envelops and evokes, like a blanket soaked in LSD. This mournful pop warms my skeptic's heart by descending into beautifully bizarre dissonance whenever it threatens to get too radio-friendly. This is a sad, sad record, and the singer kind of sounds like Neil Young. (DAL)
Future Farmer Recordings, PO Box 225128, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.futurefarmer.com

Forrest, Jason – The Unrelenting Songs Of The 1979 Post Disco Crash, CD

Distorted samples from the days of glam nestled against frenzied binary beats. It's like tweaked out disco or coked up digi-rock—either way it's the soundtrack to dancing atop lit boxes. (AA)
Sonig Records, Kleiner Griechenmarkt 28-30 50676 Köln, Germany, www.sonig.com

Franklin For Short – In The Dark, CD

Franklin For Short play very listenable, melodic indie rock. Aside from the silly fun of "How Do You Do?", the songs are serious and emotional. The backbone of the music is the acoustic guitar embellished by drums, bass and occasional electric guitar and organ with some nice vocal harmonies. (SJ)
Stereo Tyke Records, 6169 Arabian Pl, Camarillo, CA 93012, stereo_tyke_records@hotmail.com

Frequency, The – S/T, CD

This record starts out with a song called "You're The Perfect Size" wherein lead singer/songwriter Sebastian Thomas intones, "You're the perfect size for me," which is I guess is nice but comes off, like,

totally creepy. Of course, this record probably has tons of built-in fans as Thomas, uh, moonlights, as a member of Trans Am, so it doesn't really matter that this is electro-y, midtempo-y more or less inoffensive but unimpressive stuff. Fans of Nine Inch Nails' more mellow songs might be into this dude's vocals and mid-'80s steeze. (JG)
Noreaster Failed Industries/self-released, www.thefrequencymusic.com

Friends Of Dean Martinez – Random Harvest, CD

This moody, instrumental album with a rock edge sort of reminds me of something off of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. The soundtrack quality of this album can't be underestimated. Fans of Calexico, Mogwai and GYBE, check it out. (EG)
Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, 4th Fl., Ste. 3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Fuck Yeahs, The – No Farts, No Glory, 7"

The best hardcore is always catchy and spastic, while the best pop punk has an edge and is frantic. The Fuck Yeahs bash away somewhere in the middle of all that punk-rock hair-splitting. On this 7", the Minnesota quartet blasts through six songs of infectious, anthemic popcore. (RR)
Learning Curve Records, 2200 Fourth St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418, www.learningcurverecords.com

Fucked Up – Epics In Minutes, CD

A strong collection of singles, outtakes and demos from this tuneful Toronto HC/punk band, featuring members of Career Suicide and Ruination. They don't reinvent the wheel, but they give it a damn good spin. (JC)
Deranged Records, PO Box 543, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2T1 Canada, www.derangedrecords.com

Fur Cups For Teeth – Allergic 2 Fur, CD

How is it that Le Tigre opened a School of Womanly Rock and I wasn't sent a catalog of classes? I was initially skeptical of FCFT with their looped guitar riffs, cheap Casio beats and rally-girl vocals. As I kept listening, an SAT-like analogy came to mind: FCFT:Le Tigre::Bishop:Modest Mouse, which is to say that the lesser-known bands have done such an awesome job ripping off their respective influences that you're willing to forgive their copycat tendencies. Stand-out tracks include the grooving "Going To Bars," which verges on electro-snob, but the woo-wooooo of a slide whistle removes any and all pretensions. And you've gotta give it up for the revved-up vacuum cleaner slicing through "Happy For, Proud Of." "Mystery Train" is undoubtedly the money-shot song on this eight-track CD. The soulful chorus, "Darling, darling, your love is like a mystery trai-ai-ain/ Wherever it goes, it goes and it ain't never comin' back-ack-ack-ack," intertwines seamlessly with a bust-out-your-pom-poms cheer. If you ain't careful, the Train will pummel through your brain. (AA)
Self-released, www.furcupsforteeth.com

Furious Billy – Sissyfoot, CD

This is an inane, harebrained album with a mean streak. Casey Brandt seemingly wants to piss everyone off with annoying "songs" like "All You Sons Of Bitches." When not screaming, he's singing barely audible vocals over twangy, hoe-down guitars. I'm sure the lyrics are mostly nonsense, but I couldn't really hear them. (SP)
Mungler Winslowe Records, PO Box 150671, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.munglerwinslowe.com

Gabriel Boyer & The Thousand Eyes – The Textbook Tapes, CD

Lead vox sings like paranoid Matthew Sweet, sometimes switching to beat-influenced spoken word. Female backup vocals make for a needed contrast. Sadly, my iMac pooped out during the critique of the enhanced part of this CD, which includes the novel *The Manakin Textbook* by Colin Jacks. (EG)
Mister Records, 199 South St., #5, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, www.misterrecords.com

Gainer – You Say It Like It's A Bad thing..., CD

If you remember the Enkindels and wish they never called it quits, you might do well picking up a copy of Gainer's full-length. Their brand of indie-rock/pop-punk reminded me of the early Enkindels and the latter Whippersnapper records. Just good, rocking fun without anything remotely tacky. How refreshing. (BN)
Bent Rail Foundation, PO Box 2283, Birmingham, AL 35201, www.bentrail.com

Get Fucked – S/T, CD

Here's a super badass band outta Philly jamming some heavy Gravity Records-type joints. I love punk-rock screams, which make you wonder what the singer sounds like after a day of recording. Let's just hope the monitors work and he doesn't blow out his vocal chords. (DI)
Level-Plane, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Give Up The Ghost – Year One, CD

This combines Give Up The Ghost's (or should I say American Nightmare's?) first two EPs and throws in three live tracks at the end (including a cover of MC5's "Kick Out The Jams"). This is worth picking up if you're a fan and missed out on those first two EPs. (KM)
Bridge Nine Records, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199-0052, www.bridge9.com

Gold Cash Gold – Paradise Pawned, Vol. 1, CD

It's fitting that this band's record is called *Paradise Pawned*, because listening to their garage rockish songs, you get the sense that they'd sell their guitars for beer money. A rollicking, solid record, *Paradise* is unbri-dled traditional rock that doesn't resort to tired industry clichés. (JG)
Times Beach Records, 118 E. Seventh St., Royal Oak, MI 48067, www.timesbeachrecords.com

Good Brothers – Project Blowed Presents The Good Brothers, CD

This is a pretty amateur-sounding, seemingly never-ending collection of 18 songs full of melodramatic rhetoric and cliché posturing. The songs are all pretty sparse and simple sound-wise, but in a boring way. None of it's original or terribly interesting—listening to it, I couldn't wait for it to end. (KR)
Project Blowed, 4343 Leimart Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90008, www.projectblowed.com

Good Life, The – Lovers Need Lawyers, CDEP

The Good Life's follow-up EP to 2002's *Black Out* is a much less moody-pop affair. They've stripped down the sound a bit, using fewer instruments and fewer musicians to put together some upbeat, catchy, rock songs. There's a folk element at work here as well that keeps the EP simple, familiar and straightforward. The lyrics are, of course, undeniably Tim Kasher, with talk of failed relationships, drinking and Omaha. Exciting for Cursive fans, the "Art Is Hard" dilemma on *The Ugly Organ* comes out on the Good Life's "Entertainer"—how I love inces-

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

Gauze, S/T 7": My first thought on this record was looking at the back and thinking, "Holy shit, the drummer of that band could crush me like a twig." So much for the emasculated Asian male stereotype! Japanese hardcore fans might wonder why I didn't spotlight one of their seminal LPs, but I did the 7" because it's not a hard-to-find, out-of-print, foreign release. It's done by Prank, so it can be found by your favorite Mordam carrier. Around for almost two decades, the legendary Gauze created a lasting legacy on Japanese hardcore, an already influential genre. In 1996, Ken brought the band to the Bay Area to play couple of shows and then to Polymorph to record six songs—five old and one new. Gauze is dedicated to pushing it to the limit: playing as explosively as possible, as fast as they can and with as much energy as possible. And done well. What the listener is punished with is relentless hardcore at blazing speed played so tight, you'll need the lubricant.

My Top Five Woody Allen Favorites: Fucked Up, *Epics In Minutes* CD; Dragzilla, demo; No Hope For The Kids LP, Fourth Rotor, *Seize* LP; Punch In The Face live.



tuos band dialogue. The Good Life still seem to be finding their sound or experimenting with different ones, but either way, they're churning out some damn good bittersweet rock songs in the process. (AJA) Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, www.saddle-creek.com

Justin Gorman IX:XI – Minority of One, CD

Just about once per *Punk Planet* review session I'll get one of these Gorman-esque records. A record produced solely on somebody's brother's old Casio, mastered on a four-track and put out with money from somebody's inheritance, trust fund or whatever. A record that hopes to be the next Atom And His Package, but really just sucks, and sucks not only musically, but also humor-wise. No more not-funny "Funny Rock," OK? (JG)

Self-released, PO Box 259661, Madison, WI 53725-9661, mr.o@excite.com

Grace Like Gravity – Nothing We Say Leaves This Room, CD

Yet another emo band that desperately needs to put some roll in their rock. If you're heavily into the genre, I guess it's OK. I, for one, struggle to find any redeeming qualities in this junk. (AJ)

Mh Records/self-released, 1020 15th St., #13K, Denver CO 80202, www.gracellikegravity.com

Green Goblin Project, The – Fluke, CD

The Green Goblin Project is an abnormal act from Florida that's all over the map, but in a good way. They sometimes play straight early '80s hardcore-infused punk, but more of the time they have a major synth-rock and Euro-pop influence that shouldn't work, but does. They remind me of a far superior and far punker Avenged Sevenfold, which may not sound like an endorsement. But this band's uniqueness rests in their being one of the few I've heard that borrows from genres I normally can't stand, yet manages to pull together an end result well worth checking out. *Fluke* is the CD version of Green Goblin Project's two latest EPs, and even in this digital format, the recordings are nice and raw. (AE)

Bony Orbit Records, 719 Forrest Ave., #5, Cocoa, FL 32922, www.geocities.com/bonyorbit

Gregory, Troy – Laura, CD

Solo stuff from the Witches' head man Troy Gregory from Detroit. Troy is an incredible songwriter and session musician, but I'm not so hip to his second solo record here. The vocals are drowned in reverb, which gets old. The songs are great though, so it's a hit and miss. (EA)

Fall Of Rome, PO Box 69431, Los Angeles, CA 90069, www.fallofrome.com

Grey Does Matter – How To Make Millions In Real Estate, CD

Too catchy power pop released by one-man-band Jason Crawford. The songs are undoubtedly hooky, but to the point of redundancy, and some of the lyrics just plain silly, but hopefully tongue in cheek. Good for one or two songs. (AJA)

Jankomatic Music, 132 Crosby St., Fourth Floor, New York, NY 10012, www.jankomatic.com

Handgun Bravado – These Days Move Fast, CD

Clean, tight, fast-paced punk rawk the way these folks from their previous bands intended it (former band credits held until end to avoid premature excitement). Imagine Stan Lee of Dickies fame or Ghetty Lee of Rush, both having a very distinctive vocal style, fronting a

melodic but yet aggressive band. The vocals may not sound enticing from that description, but when bands do the fast punk thing, vocals can make or break a band. To follow up on the previous statement, this is not another '90s Fat Wreck type of sound. If the kids knew about the circle dance from days past, they'd be sweatin' to the punk-rock oldies, I tell ya. But besides the name, which I'm not crazy about, this does make for a memorable listen. Finally, featuring Arne from Zoinks and Colin from Dag Nasty and the Marshes. As well as Brian Baker (Minor Threat, Bad Religion) on a few tracks. Now feel free to go "Oh, I like those bands. It must be good." (DM)

Firefly Recordings, PO Box 30179 London E17 5FE, UK, www.fireflyrecordings.com

Hatepinks, The – Sehr Gut Rock And Roll, CD

I totally love when bands have theme songs that are short and loud to start off their record. It makes a goddamn statement like, "We are The Hatepinks baby!" In case you just randomly put a CD in without looking, you know who you are listening to. It takes big balls of them to put the Pagans "Boy Can I Dance Good," as the second track. Brilliant, I applaud you, The Hatepinks. Thirteen tracks clocking in under 24 minutes, *Sehr Gut Rock And Roll* is a masterpiece in the making. Rip Off Records should have put this out; it would have fit right alongside all their best releases and would have sold a million (or a few thousand). Halfway through, they slow it down for "My Friends Are Assholes," a ballad of sorts that breaks up the speed well. I love that they sing in English, yet the lyric sheet is in French. At least now I know how to write "Your Rotten Heart" in French. Lollipop Records has been releasing a couple of hits lately. Look for more from both The Hatepinks and Lollipop soon. (EA)

Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Monseigneur, 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Havergal – Electricita, CD

I'm surprisingly impressed by this Modest Mouse-sounding CD. I liked the guitar with the experimental noises that sound like backward masking. After studying it for a long time, I decided to stop trying to figure it out and just enjoy it. (DI)

Secretly Canadian, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington IN 47401, www.secretlycanadian.com

Haymarket Riot – Mog, CD

These Chicago darlings maintained the "rock" in indie rock that has virtually disappeared amongst their late-'90s peers. Their blistering post-punk teeters on tense hesitation to driving kamikazes that always catches the listener off-guard. It's more subdued this time around, which I hope isn't a sign of things to come. (VC)

Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com / Divot Records, PO Box 14061, Chicago, IL 60614-0061, www.divotrecords.com

Here Kitty Kitty – This Is Broken, CD

This is one of those CDs that crept on me. At first I was like, "This is decent poppy punk." But the more I listened, the catchier it got. HKK play female-fronted poppy punk that sounds like a combination of late '80s Lookout, early '80s SoCal punk and maybe Sicko. Three chords,

bouncy bass lines and quick drum beats may not sound like much, but when the two vocalists are singing together or when they're getting a little sassy on songs like "Lucy Grey," it's hard not to get these songs stuck in your head. Another great song is "Firecracker" that has a more Runaways-type rock sound, which makes it (kind of) fitting that they'd cover the Joan Jett song "Do You Wanna Touch" as the CD closer. I think they could give The Donnas a run for their hard-rock money, but I like their snappy punk songs just as much. (NS)

Lorelei, PO Box 902, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, www.loreleirecords.com

Hint Hint – Young Days, CD

Held together with tribal drums, pogoing bass and jagged guitar lines, Hint Hint's sound is an intricate balance between solid, sonic thunder and the brink of collapse. As are the vocals that, unlike the music, are sometimes grating in their teetering between fear and angst. (CC)

Suicide Squeeze Records, PO Box 80511, Seattle, WA 98108, www.suicidesqueeze.com

Holden's Catch – S/T, CDEP

Some lively, even somewhat jazzy, basslines stand out from the hard rock morass here and keep this record listenable, in spite of the vocalist's incredible resemblance to the grunting British guy from Bush. Those unusual bass licks stand out from a very polished overall package. (DAL)

Get Around Records, www.getaroundrecords.com

Holland, Jolie – Escondida, CD

Mixing elements of folk and jazz, *Escondida* feels as if it accidentally traveled through time from the 1930s to now. From Holland's shaky but assured delivery to the use of horn solos to her choice of covers ("Mad Tom Of Bedlam"), the album succeeds in recreating this vintage sound. That's not to say the entire record is a recreation; the folk-pop "Good Bye California" stands out from the other songs' jazz and blues foundations with its more modern approach. Holland's voice is classic and easy on the ears, and she delivers enjoyable, angst-ridden love songs filled with nostalgia and regret. (AJA)

Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.anti.com

HollowPoints, The – Annihilation, CDEP

Melodic hardcore with lashing guitars, raucous vocals and an affinity for rock 'n' roll. "The Hemingway Solution" and "Annihilation" are the standouts and demonstrate how this band has matured since their last release, with the introspective writing and continual barrage of punk-rock aggression. (BN)

Dirtmap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtmaprecs.com

Honorary Title, The – Anything Else But The Truth, CD

Anything Else But The Truth reminds me a lot of the latest Ryan Adams record, which was one of my favorites of 2003. Pretty straight-forward rock music, but the song variety keeps me interested. It works well in the singer/songwriter vein. (DA)

Doghhouse Records, 3607 Seneca Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90039, www.doghouserrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

Sebadoh, Bakesale: A magnet's coil produces the force to move charged particles, creating a magnetic field that can only be stopped by something metallic. On *Bakesale*'s "Magnet's Coil," Lou Barlow sings: "Nobody wants another mirror on their fears/ I guess that's all you are to me/ But I don't really want to lose this/ Does it all depend on you/ It's always personal between us." And it is. At least between me and Sebadoh. The lyrics, glued together with the skewed Barlow/Jason Loewenstein pop sensibility, move from my usual shift between self-righteous to self-esteem to self-loathing. From fear to bliss. The convergence of emotions from your run-of-the-mill daily drama ("I don't need to sleep on it/ I'll smoke a thousand cigarettes") is half the beauty of *Bakesale*, a record where Barlow/Loewenstein (with revolving drummers) make themselves so vulnerable that you let them share your temporary joys ("I'm taking your morning warm with me out into the day/ I don't care if nothing else goes my way all day") and bear your short-term burdens—or at least keep them contained to cassette. Because there's something about *Bakesale* that's metallic. Maybe it's the taste of dirty guitar strings in the middle of their slow decay, grooves caked in with ground guitar-pick dust from Barlow/Loewenstein's driving hands, aching to hold on to bright melodies. Maybe it's the taste of blood in your mouth from all of Sebadoh's two-fisted punches of raw/wrong/right emotion. Either way, *Bakesale* somehow compiles, contains and mirrors a chunk of the extraordinary nature of everyday misery and joy.

Resurfacing: Helium, *The Dirt of Luck*; The Jesus Lizard, *Goat*; Sonic Youth, *Dirty*; Pavement, *Slow Century* DVD.

☛ Horror, The – First Blood Parts I And II, CD

Featuring ex-members of Voorhees along with a new singer, these guys kick ass. They play fast, short hardcore songs, filling 25 minutes up with 28 songs. Vocalist Andrew Bryant is obviously well-read, as he writes about a variety of topics you don't hear in hardcore every day. In the song "Has Patrick Swayze Become Cynical Or Not?", Bryant writes about the U.S. and U.K.'s obsession with reality TV, while "Quote Cliché" analyzes something that Ian MacKaye once said in an interview. I guess that makes The Horror the thinking person's hardcore band. And hey, the music kicks ass too. This CD is actually two different 10" records put together, so the production on the second half of the songs isn't quite as clear as the first half, where the drums are just raging in your face. (SJ)

Coalition Records, Newtonstraat 212, 2562 KW Den Haag, The Netherlands, www.coalition-records.com; Chainsaw Safety Records, PO Box 260318, Bellerose, NY 11426, www.chainsawsafetyrecords.com

Hotel – S/T, CD

Charming, jangly indie rock with a young Bob Dylan soundalike on vocals. The music is deceptively simple, with lots of subtle accompaniments like harmonica, keyboards and harp. Add some female backing vocals and smooth guitar solos, and you've got one pretty good pop album. (NS)

Forge Records/self-released, PO Box 3601, Woodbridge, CT 06525, www.hotelsongs.com

Hotrod Boogie – Last Train To Chuco, CD

This band will take you straight back to the era of greasers, drive-ins and surf mania with their ode to '50s rock 'n' roll. Classic bunnyhop rock/rockabilly, complete with surfy/slide guitar licks and toe-tapping bass kicks. Totally fun and great for anyone with a passion for rockabilly or oldies. (MG)

Broken Boney Records, www.brokenbonerecords.com

Hoy – S/T, CD

Hoy ushers in the rebirth of slack with his lo and lower-fi indie pop that recalls a less ambitious Weezer or a more ambitious Pavement. This is fortified with 10 essential hooks that'll bounce through your head well after the disc's end. (PS)

Dunket Records, Attn. GHoy, 586 Sixth Ave., Apt #6, Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.dunketrecords.com

Human Television – Orange EP, CDEP

Telling by the artwork and first five seconds of this EP, I thought this would be a completely unlistenable, drawn-out display of electronic noise. Instead the noise turned into an off-kilter set of three songs that were pretty enjoyable spastic pop. It's too bad it was so short-lived; I see some potential here. (AJA)

Soft Abuse, PO Box 2771, Tallahassee, FL 32316-2771, www.softabuse.com

Hurt Process, The – Drive By Monologue, CD

Victory continues to keep up to date with changing times in hardcore by bringing this great contemporary emo-hardcore band from the UK. They will keep the kids hooked with their interesting mix of harmonies and hardcore. Dark and brooding without being depressing or overly chintzy, this is really damn good. (AE)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

Hagfish, Rocks Your Lame Ass. Any band that claims they can rock my lame ass had better do it! I first heard Hagfish on a comp, and their straight-ahead rock (like a slightly cleaner New Bomb Turks meets the Teen Idols) took me by surprise. Named after a nasty smelling fish, these boys ain't afraid to get a little dirty. They sing quick two-minute songs about oral sex, sex and then some sex—but in a classy way. These four suit-wearing boys put out some fine records (and maybe still do) of catchy song after catchy song, back when you weren't sick of catchy punk rock like we all are today, thanks to modern rock radio. Produced in 1995 by Bill S. from All, *Rocks...* has top-notch production, almost perfect-sounding guitars and that punch that so many bands long for. George's vocals blend the perfect amount of snotty attitude and melodic charm. Even on their live record, the band shine. Get this and from the track "Happiness" to the 14th song, "Hose," you will be lovin' the stink of Hagfish.

Five bands I thought about spotlighting: 1. Guzzard 2. Pink Floyd 3. The Doors 4. Tool 5. Jawbox (again).

Husbands, The— Daniel / You Need Hands, 7"

The Husbands are an all-female group that use the guitar/vocals/drums combination made popular by The White Stripes. This is raw, pounding garage rock with some great, bluesy vocals and guitar playing. They may be seemingly jumping on a bandwagon, but The Husbands rise above most. (JG)

Blue Bus Records, PO Box 31130 San Francisco, CA 94131, www.bluebusrecordings.com

Icewater Scandal – No Handle, CD

The addled, muted guitar strumming scratches the landscape like shovels digging graves, while the vocals come in tortured wisps like some angel of death, then it turns into a nursery rhyme. It's like eating your Lydia Lunch outside on the Pavement. Very interesting, it's produced by Lee Ranaldo of Sonic Youth. (DAL)

The Social Registry, 362 Atlantic Ave., Ste. 115, Brooklyn, NY 11217, www.thesocialregistry.com

IfiHadAHIFI – No More Music, CD

Whatever frantic, guttural rock energy IfiHadAHIFI have unearthed is totally radioactive. The bass and guitar chug without ever losing fervor, and their great shout-out vocals are answered with harmonized callbacks. Their style is based on rudimentary rock, but their high energy brings it a new life. (CC)

Contraphonic Records, PO Box 2203, Chicago, IL 60690, www.contraphonic.com

Inside Recess – S/T, CD

Chaotic metalcore hellbent on breaking brains with its spastic blast beats and dueling metal vocals, one taking the shrill high road while the other takes the guttural low road. Much like an amusement park ride, the dynamic lulls your attention long enough to forget Inside Recess' manic attack. (PS)

Self-released, 2311 Ohio Ave., #4, Cincinnati, OH 45219, www.insiderecess.com

☛ Insides, The – Endangered Young'uns, CD

Don't get me wrong, I don't want everyone to record on a boom box, but some bands would benefit from a rougher recording, like this one. The Insides are a catchy punk band that would fit well with a lot of the stuff on Plan-It-X Records. While having a bit of a pop edge, *Endangered Young'uns* rocks when you need it to. The dual male/female vocals are one of the Insides' strong points. The credits list that they used a Moog; maybe I wasn't listening hard enough, but I didn't hear it much. More Moog please! It's hard to pick out any certain songs that stand out as the "best," because they're all good. Buy this. (DA)

Harlan Records, 7205 Geronimo North Little Rock, AR 72116, www.geocities.com/harlanrecords/

Instrumental Quarter – No More Secrets, CD

This Italian quartet plays sweeping, beautifully arranged, instrumental music with guitar, bass, violoncello and drums. While not the sort of thing I listen to very often, it's a very pleasant change of pace. Fans of Low and the Dirty Three would surely appreciate these moody and moving pieces. (JC)

Sickroom Records, Ltd. PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

☛ Io – Where The Engines Lay, CD

Have you ever read one of those classic detective stories where, when the author wants to introduce the final plot twist, the protagonist says

something like, "Everything seems to be perfect, a little *too* perfect..."

And upon stating this, the story goes swirling in another direction, leaving the audience satiated and thoroughly entertained? Well, lo has that formula down pat, but it's presented in a less than satisfying way. Such a crisp, safe-sounding recording might impress the CEOs at Warner Brothers, but where's the fun in that? (MS)

Eleventh Hour Records/self-released, 298 Fourth Ave. Box 453, San Francisco CA 94118, www.10rock.com

Jack Sparr – S/T, CD

Jack Sparr kicks off their self-titled EP with a chainsaw grinding its way into their style of gritty rock rhythms folded into techno beats and a rap-style vocal delivery. If they'd have beat A.R.E. Weapons to the punch, it might even sound revolutionary. (CC)

420x10 Records/self-released, 46284 440th St., Windom, MN 5601

☛ Jackie-O Motherfucker – Discography, 2xCD

Here's a band that's been around for 10 years and moved around the country letting it all hang out. There are a lot of guitars, scratching and sound effects during this 100-minute double CD. It's environmental music; read the warning sticker on the album about operating heavy machines while listening. Seriously though, if you do enter JOMF world, you'll find some strange sounds in your speakers or headphones. I've found some Mr. Rogers and a couple subliminal sampled songs. It's a good thing computer operation isn't considered heavy machinery, or I'd have caused an accident snoozing during the first listen. (DI)

All Tomorrow's Parties Recording, www.atpfestival.com/atp_recordings

January Taxi, The – Keep Quiet, They Might Hear Us, CD

Catchy indie/alternative stuff from this talented three-piece. This CD starts off with a couple rockin' numbers, then takes it down a little toward the end of the CD. But even the slower songs are powerful and memorable, with nice dual vocal harmonies. A tad quirky and some good lyrics to boot. Nice work. (NS)

Vacant Cage, 1784 W. Northfield Blvd. #214, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, www.vacantcagerecords.com

J.A.W. – Things Left Unsaid, CD

Much of today's ska scene is about high energy, unity and fun, and J.A.W. fits the bill of the All-American punk/ska band. The horns take center stage in front of rock guitars and occasional ska riffs. Overall, the album is playful, as typified on "This Song Sucks." (EG)

Self-released, 405 W. Locust St., St. Peter, MN 56082, www.jawband.com

☛ Jeffie Genetic And His Clones – Need A Wave, CD

Thank God! Something finally worth listening to more than once. This mod-rocker, who claims the band is a bunch of clones, plays some whacked out mod-punk. From the opener, "Oh No I've Been Cloned," the band (or the clones) drive their up-tempo, straight-ahead rhythms at you like a out-of-control Vespa. The fake (I think) English accent is a good touch and a must for any band that still plays this long-lost pogo-punk style. The keyboards add so much melody above the chorus at times, like in "S.O.S. Radiation." No matter what year you are in, simple guitar-rock music like this is a cold breeze on your balls on a hot summer day: refreshing. (BC)

Dirtnap Records



Jesus And The Devil – Destructive Music Resists The Oncoming Light, CDEP

These Southside Chicago boys play some hard-driving indie rock that reminds me of some of the bands Touch & Go was releasing in the early '90s, particularly Tar and Arcwelder. The song structures are fairly complex, but not so much that it takes away from the tunes. (JC)
Fudge Sickill Records, PO Box 7052, Villa Park, IL 60181, www.fudgesickillrecords.com

John Stamos Project, The – North American All-Stars, CD

If listening to suicidal adolescents from Long Island has lost its appeal, leave your Kleenex behind and stomp around to this brilliant pop-punk band instead. While the formula is familiar (three chords, a sense of humor and snotty attitudes) the trio's energetic delivery is as original as it is fulfilling. (BN)

Knock Knock Records, 394 Hewlett Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772, www.knockknockrecords.com

John Wilkes Boogie – Five Pillars Of Soul, CD

There really is more than corn in Indiana; there's this totally badass, eclectic indie-bluesrock band John Wilkes Boogie, too. JWB has developed a blend of modern R&B, soul and hippie rock fronted by evocative and vocally ambiguous Seth Mahern. (If you didn't know better, you'd think it was a lady-fronted group.) The explosive blues riffs and groovy organs induce foot stomping and a little head banging (Sweet-back's Gonna Make It, "Yoko Save Rock 'n' Roll"). Sometimes Mahern gets the itch to break into spoken word, usually about small-town revolution and ostracized historic figures. This collection of EPs is a great introduction to a small-town alt-blues group with an urgent sound. (EG)
Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave. PMB 418 Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Joyner, Simon – Lost With The Lights On, CD

Joyner's mellow, country-fied singer/songwriter stuff starts off promisingly through the first couple of tracks. But when the shortest song is 4:29 and most are nearly six minutes, the package gets kind of boring. The vocals often fall flat, which can work sometimes, but it can also be painful to hear ("Blue"). (KR)

Jagiaguwar, 1021 S. Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.jagiaguwar.com

Jucifer – War Bird, CDEP

Last year, I stopped by Chicago's Empty Bottle one night when I wasn't working. "Go look at the stage," my friend Mark said when I walked in. Looking at the stage, I didn't notice anything different—it was dark, like it always was before a band plays. But then I realized it was dark because a wall of amps were behind the drum kit, Judas Priest style (13 cabinets and like three heads, if memory serves). When Georgia's Jucifer took the stage, they were the loudest band I'd ever heard. My shirt was vibrating. This duo plays sludgy, slowly paced rock in a Black Sabbath stoner kind of way ("Haute Couture"). The rock knocks you out, but the sweet female vocals at least give a bit of a sugar coating—like Lush backed by Pelican. This, their fourth record, is ferocious enough to make you wonder if you've blown your speakers. But no, the guitar is just that distorted. "My Stars," the last track (not including the 46-plus-minute "bonus" track that just sounds like a country summer night) is a bluegrass/country number about ambivalence toward their home

country. It's an odd end, considering what came before it, but Jucifer apparently likes to keep you guessing. Recommended. (KR)
Velocette Records, 83 Walton St., Atlanta GA 30303, www.velocetterecords.com

Judas Cradle, The – Too Bad They're All Dead, CD

I wasn't expecting much from a band with such a stupid name, but I was sort of impressed when I heard how heavily these guys play. They have a very Midwestern metal-core sound, even though they are from the dirty south of Alabama. They are tight and play with a lot of energy, but they just sound much like the endless line of bands from the Milwaukee area that played at the "Pierce Street House" back when I was in Wisconsin. It's all pretty typical, screaming metal about losing girlfriends and similar lyrics that would usually accompany softer, sadder music. The insert artwork is a little strange, with pictures of some dead guy and a bloody axe. I get the feeling these guys try a little too hard, especially after being told what to wear and where to get tattooed in their thank-you lists. I did, however, like the song explanations after the posted lyrics. It was a nice, personalized touch after absorbing the whole over-production of this release. (TK)

Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Ka-Nives, The – Weasel / Dear Dad, 7"

Two covers of vintage rock 'n' roll tunes played with the sloppy intensity of The New York Dolls. It's good to hear a band that actually remembers what this stuff is supposed to sound like! (AJ)

Lance Rock Records, 370 Bruce Ave., Nanaimo, BC, V9R 3Y1, Canada, www.lancerock.com

Karmella's Game – What He Doesn't Know Won't Hurt Him, CDEP

Heavy, Moog-driven power pop foursome that can move right into pre-last album Anniversary territory; however, Karmella's Game are both more sugary and grating-on-the-ear-and-brain than the aforementioned band. Nevertheless, the kiddies seem really to dig this sound still, so they should be able to build themselves a hefty little audience. (AJA)

Speedbump Recordings, 2604 Falt Ave., Baltimore, MD 21224, www.speedbumponline.com

Kevin K And The Real Kool Kats – Addiction, CD

With lyrical nods to Stiv, Dee Dee and Johnny, you can probably guess where this is coming from. It reminds me of Marky Ramone and The Intruders. It's just a bunch of lifeless, midtempo songs. No thanks. (DA)
Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Manseur 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Kid Commando – Holy Kid Commando, CD

Definitely not to be confused with Kid Dynamite. If these guys really were commandos, they might wear palomino horses with pink hot pants over their camouflage. Which is to say they're bizarre. Which is to say, they're Swedish, and they play a strangely engrossing, high-intensity brand of quality noise rock. (DAL)

Ache Records, www.achearecords.com

Killer Dreamer – S/T, CD

This is all over the fucking place in the best ways. Ham-fisted, snotty punk smashes headlong into power-poppy hardcore, while an under-

Jesus and the Devil / the Lancasters

ground metal record blares in the background. These are 14 tracks of schizophrenic buzzsaw rock and glass-gargling pop-punk/grind ready to conquer basements the world over. (RR)

Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836, www.kapowrecords.com

Killer Squirrel – Self Released (And Loving It), CD

This one-man band is DIY in every sense of the word. One guy did all the music (guitar, bass, drum machine) and laid down some vocals/spoken-word stuff. That's all the good stuff I can say. (DM)

Operation Phoenix Records/self-released, PO Box 13380 Mills Creek, WA 98082, killersquirrel@operationphoenix.com

Killer's Kiss – Gotta Lotta Love, 7"

Trashy, soulful rock 'n' roll from former Spoiled Brats, Spastics and Cripples. The songs screech and scream and shake and come this close to falling apart. Listening to the record I thought, "This band sounds drunk!" That's a good thing. Bet they're a blast live. (JC)

Blue Bus Records, PO Box 31130, San Francisco, CA 94131, www.bluebusrecords.com

Kilowatthours / The Rum Diary – split, CD

A decent indie-rock split CD. Kilowatthours bring the stronger material with their sizeable supply of guitar pedals. The two bands also collaborate on one track, "(Ex)Change." (RL)

Springman Records, PO Box 2043 Cupertino, CA 95015, www.springmanrecords.com; Substandard Records, PO Box 310 Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Kitchens & Bathrooms – Vehides Beyond, CD

All right! Mellow math rock. Whoopee! There are a few OK grooves, but most of it just lays flat. So, in equation form: if $A + B = C$, and $C - A = 2X$, then $X = \text{this sucks}$. (AJ)

Forge Again Records, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgagainrecords.com

Kites – Royal Paint With The Metallic Gardner From The United States Of America Helped Into An Open Field By Women And Children, CD

This Kites CD is a crazy, fucked-up noise record with goofy song names and retro cover art. When I say noise, I mean noise, with the whole thing consisting of bleeps, blurps and electrical shortages. Fun for what it is, and that's saying a lot considering what it is. (AE)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Kylesa – No Ending / 100 Degree Heat Index, CD

Three crusty metal cuts from these hardcore fixtures. Toss in a Nausea cover and a cool video, and you have a nice little platter to sample from. Worth it alone to support Prank and the Pushead artwork. (DH)
Prank, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

Lahar – Collapsing Of The Soul, CDEP

Intense, yet typical, metal/mosh hardcore. If you like straight-up metal-influenced hardcore, you will probably like this. Otherwise, it's just another part of the masses doing the same thing. (MG)

Worm Fodder Records, www.odeum.org/wormfodder

Lancasters, The – Alexander & Gore, CD

Snarling, group-sung vocals, amazing bass guitar, a great sense of melody and some of the purest street/oi punk around. Impressed yet? Wait 'till I

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

The Meatmen, We're the Meatmen And You Suck. To many, The Meatmen represented all that was wrong with punk rock. Ignorant lyrics played for laughs combined with killer, straightforward, catchy hardcore punk, worked wonders for getting the band's name known across the world, but Tesco Vee became one of the most hated front men of all time. To this day, The Meatmen's infantile lyrics still have the miraculous ability to offend, which begs the question whether it's the band's fans or the band's critics that lack maturity. *We're the Meatmen And You Suck* contains some of the band's better-known hits such as "Meatmen Stomp," "Crippled Children Suck" and "Buttcks." This LP, as well as most of their other essential recordings, is included on the CD compilation *The Meatmen Stud Powercock: The Touch And Go Years 1981-1984*. The only other really essential Meatmen recording not included on that CD is 1986's *Rock 'n' Roll Juggernaut*, an underrated and hilarious classic in its own right.

Besides listening to Dead Milkmen records in memory of Dave Blood, spring also brought these records onto my turntable: The Radio Beats, *Blow You Up*, I Church, *Society Is A Carnivorous Flower*, Toys That Kill, *Flys, Condemned To Death*, *You Can't Kill a Vrat*, Bad Religion, *The Empire Strikes First*.

tell you that this is the band's debut record. It's about time a street band realized that raw and melodic are not mutually exclusive. (BN)
Longshot Music, PMB#72, 302 Bedford Ave. Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.longshotmusic.com

Laymen Terms – 3 Weeks In, CDEP

Prepare to weep. No, seriously. The combination of emotional lyrics and devastating vocal delivery make this the perfect soundtrack while parked at train crossing smoking away your last minutes. The dark and morose post-hardcore melodies bring it all together to convincingly portray the pain of heartbreak. (BN)

Suburban Home Records, PO Box 40757, Denver, CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

Leatherface – Discography Part 2: Rare And Unreleased, 12"

Where to even start? Leatherface are one of the best bands in the world and this odds and ends release shows why. This album compiles a bunch of Leatherface's earlier seven-inches, comp tracks and a few unreleased song versions. I believe there was an extra 7" that came with some of these, but as far as this LP, I know it's missing the extra live tracks from the original CD that came out on Rejected. Regardless, this album shows that there are no "throwaway" Leatherface songs. Whether they're redoing songs acoustically on "In My Life" and "Ship-yards" or making cover songs their own on "Hops And Barley" and "Melody Lee," Frankie Stubbs and company can do no wrong. Between Frankie's whiskey-drenched voice, his heartfelt lyrics and the tag-team guitars of he and Dickie Hammond, it really makes you doubt that you or anyone else could ever write such beautiful songs and still be considered punk. Well, you can't, so stop trying. (NS)

Deranged Records, PO Box 543, Station P, Toronto, ON M52 2T1, Canada, www.derangedrecords.com

Leatherface – Dog Disco, CD

I don't know what it is that keeps this band from the brightest of spotlights. *Dog Disco* is their eighth LP and features more of the melodic punk and raspy vocals that made their previous work so influential to the likes of the Swingin' Utters. Keep them records coming! (BN)

BYO Records, PO Box 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067, www.byorecords.com

Les Messieurs Du Rock – L'estase, CD

Sassy, sexy party rock from a band of Frenchmen who've relocated to Austin, Texas. Pretentious? You bet—just look at their name. Thankfully they've got good songs and a confident fearlessness to back it up. Think The Make Up without the fake gospel. (JC)

Sixgunlover Records, 1029 Reimill Ste. #1, Austin, TX 78723, www.sixgunlover.com

Lesser Birds Of Paradise – String Of Bees, CD

This record is one of those very good multi-instrumental and well-orchestrated CDs that could be recorded in Nashville, Louisville or Chicago. Some parts of this CD sound like Smithsonian folk life recording from the 1930s. (DI)

Contraphonic Music, PO Box 2203, Chicago IL 60690, www.contraphonic.com

Life At These Speeds – S/T, CD

Portland, Ore., post-hardcore to get your ass shaking. I hear heavy influences of Fugazi as well as a few San Diego bands like Heroin. The

recording sounds great, too. I was most impressed by how the music didn't start flying into blast beats and other redundant and stereotypical screamo clichés like I expected. I think this keeps their sound original and keeps me wanting to hear more. Their sound stays pretty mellow, but urgent at the same time. This is definitely a band to check out, and this record would be a good start. (TK)

Grey Sky Records, 1631 NE Broadway PMB #109, Portland, OR 97232, www.greyskyrecords.com

Lil Pocket Knife – Pants Control, CDEP

Girl-fronted West Coast hardcore rap, yes! Cheesy beats back rad D&D-playing electro-nerds. This is stuff to roll your 12-sided die to. (JG)

Narmack Records, 281 Broadway, 4th Floor, Rm. 3, New York, New York 10013, www.narmackrecords.com

Lion Fever – Lustre, CDEP

This reminds me of old '60s R&B crossbred with punk, psychedelic rock and garage. The end result is good and the singer sounds a little like PJ Harvey. (JJG)

Dim Mak Records, 2525 Hyperion, Ste. 1, Los Angeles, CA 90027, www.dimmak.com

Lisboa – Either Origami, CDEP

Now here's a keeper. From the first song of seven on this CD, you know that this band knows what it's doing. These guys play fairly straightforward rock with nods to the Replacements and Cheap Trick, but just like those bands, Lisboa add enough flair and personality to really stand out. If bands were actually judged by songwriting skill instead of trends and image, you'd expect to hear Lisboa all over the place. Most of the songs are fairly aggressive in a melodic, indie-rock way, but even on the slow songs, the pop hooks are strong. The guitars lay down some nice melodies and occasional solos, and the rhythm section provides catchy, head-nodding rhythms. Then the singer adds some passionate singing with clever lyrics. There's even a hint of keyboard in some songs, but the effect isn't overpowering or cheesy. I look forward to hearing more from these guys. (NS)

Acutest, 528 Dodson Ct., Bay City, MI 48708, www.acutestrecords.com

Little Headhunter– S/T, CD

Sweet, lo-fi melodies that are weepy and jangly, but ultimately sweet and endearing. I have a soft spot in my heart for off-key singing, what can I say? I'd love to hear this band in a couple of years. (MS)

Scratch and Sniff Records, 320 1/2 N. Second St., Dekalb, IL 60115, www.scratchandsniffrecords.com

Loch Lomond – When We Were Mountains, CD

Loch Lomond delivers an overly mature, minimalist post-punk CD of distressing meanderings that might impress those that won't laugh at its absurd presentation. I'm flabbergasted at how miserably goofy this album is, but it's done totally straight. The production is interesting though, utilizing what appear to be echo effects. (AE)

In Music We Trust, Inc, 15213 SE Bevington Ave., Portland, OR 97267, www.inmusicwetrust.com

Lords Of Lightspeed – S/T, 12"

The Lords Of Lightspeed should have been the Jurassic Park house band. Evil as fuck and fast as hell, this record sounds like it was recorded at the far end of a wind tunnel. Not necessarily my cup of tea, but that is probably 'cause I'm into slow jams, like The Buzzcocks. (RL)

Banal Existence Records, 2746 C St., San Diego, CA 92102, berecords@

Lousy Break – Don't Wait For The Next Time, CD

This is old-school hardcore punk rock, done well. It's fast, has a lot of energy, and is just sloppy enough to keep it from sounding too clean. (JJG)

Headache Records, PO Box 204 Midland Park, NJ 07432, www.headacherecords.com

Love Story In Blood Red – S/T, CD

Jason Frederick from The Means eschews his Negative Approach-like vocals and dabbles with a calmer approach to music by putting together a few Kinks-inspired songs. There's a Jonathan Richman-like simplicity that's not overly fantastic, but honest and heartfelt—which is really all it takes. (VC)

Backward Masking, 502 Maplewood Drive, Sycamore, IL 60178, www.backwardmaskingrecords.com

Lovekill, The – S/T, CDEP

This five-song EP could herald the arrival of a great band on the rise. The Cleveland four-piece has a firm garage-punk grounding, but they take their songs in so many other directions they create a truly unique sound. Their songs have the raucous energy of garage, but then they add jazzy, dissonant chords or a powerful, ascending break that ratchets up the tension, or the vocals whip up drunk-sounding desperation into a sublime frenzy. Quality riffs, intense singing and an instinctual knack for how to build drama all make this an above-average record. The flawed, distant-sounding recording quality adds to the creepy atmosphere. And dig the last song, "Obsolete," a rockin' number that's so scorching it almost spews lava. I bet these guys are pretty out of control live. On the nonmusical side, the lyrics could be a little better, but the cover art is one of the most frightening photographs I've ever seen. But then, I have a deep, deep fear of wallpaper. (DAL)

Self-released, www.thelovekill.com

Lucky Luciano – Carry On, CD

Here's what I pictured when listening to this CD: five bands similar to Lucky Luciano form in high school. Then, after about six months of basement shows and maybe a few demo tapes, the talented members leave and form Unerath. (DH)

Go-Team Records, 25 Thames Ave., Greenmeadow, Swindon, Wilts SN25 3NR, UK, www.go-teamrecords.com

Lunaris – Cyclic, CD

Thin-sounding black metal with some horrible synthesizer. I like the old-school vibe of the riffs, but that synth needs to go. Lunaris would have fit in great circa 1988, as I can easily picture myself circle-pitting to this record. Ditch the synth, add a third guitar, and thrash! (DH)

Earache Records, 43 West 38th St., 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10018, www.earache.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Erica Gallagher (EG)

The Ponys, Laced With Romance. For me, albums that really get me going are anomalous occurrences. I think unless you're super rich and can buy all the new stuff, and music listening is a major part of your daily routine—in which case I want your life, dude—it's impossible to encounter a constant flood of awesome, new music. So it's these precious times, like when I found The Ponys' new record, that must be treasured. The Ponys' shit scares me, energizes me and speaks to me. I've always felt like an outsider, so I get it when guitarist Jerad—with his rough, off-key, yet intense voice—says he and his friends are "funny looking" and "pretty weird" (in "10 Fingers And 11 Toes"). "Chemical Imbalance" reminds me of how we're supposed to inhibit our fucked up feelings/behaviors as if it's not acceptable to be human. "Let's Kill Ourselves" is sonically potent and revisits the whole "I need mental help" bit. On the other hand, check out organist/co-vox Ian, who is an essential balance to Jerad's dark, paranoid disposition. His tracks are poppier '60s girl-group love songs ("I Love You 'Cause You Look Like Me," "Fall In"). The Ponys channel everyone from Ramones to the Velvet Underground. The best part is that every band member's flavor is represented, which makes the work diverse and gratifying. Other deep cuts include "Only One," "Discoteca" and "Virus Human."

Rotate, repeat: Bang-Matu & Orquesta Kingston, *Magia Negra*; Young Heart Attack, *Mouthful Of Love*; Modest Mouse, *Good News For People Who Love Bad News*; Sing Along With Los Straightjackets.



Lurking Corpses, The – 23 Tales Of Terror, CD

Misfits-inspired, gore-obsessed punk/metal. Sometimes the vocals are full-on death metal, and other times they're in the vein of Glen Danzig. Not the most original stuff in the world, but fun just the same. (SJ)
Self-released, www.thelurkingcorpses.com

Lyn Paul Junction – Bullzeye, CD

When did *Punk Planet* start getting *Bad Cock Rock Planet*'s mail? (RR)
Self-released, www.lpjrecords.com

Macpherson, Greg – Maintenance, CDEP

Everyone is a folk singer nowadays. Macpherson plays that mainstream type of folk music, and I don't really care for it. It's too slick, too perfect—sounds like Pearl Jam unplugged. (SJ)

67 Welcoming Committee Records, PO Box 27006, C-360 Main St, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Madvillain – Madvillainy, CD

This record is *heavy*. Not aggressive heavy, but hangover heavy when there's a tumor-like growth on your sinuses. Imagine a gorilla grindin' an elephant in your nasal cavity to a slow jam. It's sluggish and hazy, but rippling with pulsating energy. The much-anticipated collaboration from A.D.D. superhero MF Doom and prolific personality chameleon Madlib is like being high as fuck and watching VHI marathon of Remember the '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. The tag-team sounds like a sloppy cruise into schizophrenia, but the two manage stay conscious of the other's role and focus on complementing rather than showcasing. Madlib's warped beats loop around deft sampling that's as clever as Prince Paul, but spans a greater pop-culture palette. MF Doom's ominous rhyme delivery is like the Hulk nimbly tackling a tightrope—clumsy, but on point. Despite expanding its scope of reference by universes, the duo tapped into the pulse that holds elements seamlessly together and created a classic underground hip-hop album. (VC)
Stones Throw Records, 2658 Griffith Park Blvd., #504, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.stonesthrow.com

Magnus – Sleepwalker, CD

Sleepwalker was a bit hard to review because I had a lot of conflicting feelings about it. On one hand, Magnus' brand of indie pop is well done, with good production, singing and some interesting changes within the songs. On the other hand, nothing about this release produced a visceral reaction. (JJG)

02Beat Music 861 W. Lakeside Pl. #3F, Chicago, IL 60640

Maguire, Thomas Patrick – Pissing Streams, CD

Thomas Patrick Maguire is a guy with no vault. He has no spot in his memory bank where things get locked in forever with no chance for parole. Everything he feels, everything he hears, everything he witnesses or has been done to him will make it into one of his songs. You

get the warm-welcoming tour of a two- or three-month span in his life with *Pissing Streams*, 21 tracks of Evan Dandoisms that give the whole truth according to poetry and a four-track. (SM)
Luv-A-Lot Records, 115 W. 136th St., New York, NY 10030, www.abstraxtract.com/luvalotrecords/

Make Believe – S/T, CDEP

Sidestepping the "anything goes" approach of their infamous alias, Joan Of Arc, Chicago's Make Believe pretend that they're a conventional rock band. Freeing themselves of the cut & paste computer trickery and revolving-door casting calls synonymous with their other incarnation, Make Believe have found there's plenty of joyful noise still to be found in guitars they've perhaps underused over the years. Sam Zurick's maniacal fingerpicking sounds like the ghost of a delta bluesman channeled through Fugazi's guitar pickups. His unique style complements, if not outshines, the Tim Kinsella cult of personality; it's an arduous task, considering Tim's as engaging as ever. Kinsella's slightly refined vocal approach, coupled with his witty barbs at pop culture and only-he-knows prose, percolate with a fervor not seen since Owls fluttered by a few years back. To be sure, Make Believe will continue to make music separate from our expectations, but if this debut is any indication of what's to come, haters may be damned to make believe they were fans all along. (PS)
Flameshovel Records, 1658 Milwaukee Ave., #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Man Man – S/T, CDEP

Like the soundtrack to your most bizarre dreams, Man Man sound like carnival music with a little Beefheart stuck in its throat. Xylophones, Rhodes synthesizers and a creepy children's chorus have me looking forward to my next nightmare, or at least a full-length Man Man release. (PS)
Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Marathon – Songs To Turn The Tide, CDEP

Talk about a pleasant and very rare surprise. It was the lyrics that drew me into this record. It's almost like a political punk puzzle, trying to decipher the symbols and the meanings while rocking out to the very capable hardcore rollicking underneath. This New York five-piece includes former members of Rochester and NYC bands Standfast, De La Hoya and Disaster. The materials that come with this review copy include a mini-manifesto saying underground music risks becoming irrelevant because of "an obsession with heartbreak." I was a little worried about what kind of painfully earnest political hardcore they were proposing would save the underground, but when the stereo came alive and I followed along with their lyric sheet, the depth of their compositions and the wide-ranging themes they tackle came as a real surprise. They riff on everything from social/economic constructions of what's sexy to a number about the "Don" and global organized crime, to urban blight, to post-9/11 jingoism. (DAL)

Red Leader Records, PO Box 20836, Park West Finance Station, New York, NY 10025, www.redleaderrecords.com

Martin, Jimmy – Don't Cry to Me, CD

It's always a little strange to me when a record company sends a record like *Don't Cry to Me to Punk Planet*. I can never quite tell if they "get it" and understand that we take a pretty wide focus in our coverage, or if they just treat their promo CDs like buckshot, shooting wildly at anything that moves. Either way, I'm glad Don't Cry to Me showed up. The soundtrack to the documentary *King of Bluegrass: the Life and Times of Jimmy Martin*, Don't Cry to Me features 10 original live recordings of old time bluegrass done right. (DS)

Thrill Jockey Records PO Box 08038 Chicago IL 60608

Martyr AD – On Earth As It Is In Hell, CD

As soon as I see that Victory Records logo, I automatically assume it to be crap, and I wait until I've listened to everything else in my review package before I toss it in. I can't help it. The label just doesn't appeal to me. That's why I was pretty surprised to hear Martyr AD. The sound is still tough-guy music with "jud jud" break downs, and the lyrics are still tough-guy lyrics about being angry about some arbitrary aspect of their life that they can't fix, but there is an aspect of melody that comes up every once in a while in a few of their songs that is pretty refreshing. Also, there are a few songs that actually rock: fast, metallic and melodic, but still really "hard." Although it isn't great by any stretch of my musical opinion, it is good for Victory records. Maybe next time I won't assume that I'll completely hate a Victory band. (TK)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Matches, The – E. Von Dahl Killed The Locals, CD

Look for these Warped Tour-bound matches to fully ignite this summer. Not bad for four 18-21 year olds from Oakland who caught Mr. Brett's attention with a basement demo. Solid pop punk with clever lyrics ("She's got ADD but isn't bored with me"), bright melodies and even the requisite acoustic song. (DAL)

Epitaph Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaph.com

Matt Pond PA – Emblems, CD

Catchy, melodic rock that manages to retain some actual substance. Many songs have the feel of David Bowie's more folksy stuff. Pleasant enough to play chess to. (AJ)

Altitude Records, no contact info provided, www.mattpondpa.com

Matty Pop Chart / Welcome Home, Nemo – split, CD

Both Matty and Nemo are one-man, lo-fi folk singers. Matty, who is 18, is young and has potential, while Nemo isn't much of a singer. Nemo occasionally ventures into experimental pop, which I find much more interesting. (SJ)

Friends And Relatives Records, PO Box 23, Bloomington, IN 47402, friendsandrelativesrecords@yahoo.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

Angel Hair, Pregnant With The Senior Class. By way of Colorado, Angel Hair made their way to California and sparked what some call the "San Diego sound," a dissonant and powerful combination of hardcore, art punk and emotional intensity that still influences legions of underground hardcore bands. Along with bands like Heroin, Clikatat Ikatowi and Antioch Arrow, Angel Hair developed a sound that swiftly became a whole new subgenre in the punk scene. Call it screamo, call it emotional hardcore, call it what you will, this band was the real deal. Band member Sonny is also known for such pivotal projects as The VSS and Gravity Records. This CD is a discography, collecting all their LP and 7" tracks on one handy disc of insanely mind-blowing, noisy hardcore. Although it hasn't been that long since the demise of this band, they're definitely a classic.

Phat beatz: TV On The Radio, *Desperate Youth Blood Thirsty Babes*, The Ponys, *Laced With Romance*, A Certain Ratio reissues on Universal Sounds; the comeback of Ze Records.

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

Yo La Tengo, Electr-O-Pura. Among Yo La Tengo's nearly 20 or so full-length releases, 1995's *Electr-O-Pura* stands out for nothing more than its beautiful simplicity. The 14 tracks on the record lift and sway with a surprising innocent longing—a longing hardly associated with such a dumpy, middle-aged band. *Electr-O-Pura* encapsulates the feverish desire of young love on tracks like "My Heart's Reflection" where Ira Kaplan croons, "I want to see my heart's reflection in your eyes" with an intense want. Kaplan trades vocal duties with drummer/wife Georgia Hubley, accentuating the boy-girl love dynamic of the record. Nowhere is this more apparent than on "(Straight Down To The) Bitter End," a song whose title says it all. All in all, *Electr-O-Pura* is a lovely and lovelorn record, perfect for multitudinous crushed out mix tapes and post-break up listening.

Me Jam You Spam - Me Show You Good Time, 7"

Me Jam You Spam's beats are great and heavy on their synthesizer's handclap key. Led by female vox that sound like they're coming from a megaphone inside a closet, they meld the tripping tempos of techno with kitschy rock idiosyncrasies while tinkering with synthesizers and melodies. (CC)

Norway Rat Records, Postboks 299, 1702 Sarpsborg, Norway, www.norwayratrecords.com

Measles Mumps Rubella - Fountain Of Youth, CDEP

Kid, it's all about the beats, and Measles Mumps Rubella has an in on the action. Broken open bottleneck beats (the full-length edit), space bass (the Trans Am remix of the title track) and creep-creep-click-click-boom drums (all over). Then from inside the tidal wave tube of drums and bass come the vocals and guitar going from barely contained to completely ape shit, like the crazy guy in the Metro who makes more sense than most philosophers. They just want someone to talk to, man. But all that, that's just the teaser EP. This shot from D.C. is, after all, the art punk, the punk funk, the whatnot. Layers will be involved. And for the first time, in a long time, it sounds so damn hot. Even, or especially, when the track clocks in at 12 min. (CC)

Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Method And Result, The - The Things You Miss, CDEP

The Method: Lace guitar, upright bass, piano and delicate vocal melodies into the minimalist crackle and hum of a synthesized background. The Result: Six tracks of eccentric, but accessible, lovely indie-pop songs. (CC)

The Losing Blueprint Records, 94 Prince St., #3, Boston, MA 02113, www.losingblueprint.com
/ Kira Kira Disc, 2532 Herschel St., Ste. 4, Jacksonville, FL 32204-4531, www.kirakiradisc.com

Minethirtyseven - S/T, CDEP

Five songs of rough and scrappy rock. Honest and heartfelt songs that go from soft to bombastic and back again. Nice melodies and guitar work. Not quite awesome, but a good start. (NS)

Self-released, www.minethirtyseven.com

Minks, Thee - Songs About Boys, 7"

Three tough Philly chicks crank out nasty '60s garage-rock stompers with some tasty psych keys thrown in. Like if the girl groups of Motown Records hung out with the Stooges and MCS more. Great mid-fi recording, raw but not too rough. Works for me. (JC)

Steel Cage Records, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125, www.steelcagerecords.com

Minus Story - The Captain Is Dead, Let The Drum Corpse Dance, CD

Using an eclectic assortment of sounds and instruments, Minus Story creates their lo-fi self-proclaimed "wall of crap" sound. They throw a lot at you, all of it decidedly imperfect. It's poppy, it's noisy, it's weird. Maybe it's the Flaming Lips they're trying to replicate—even so, it doesn't do much for me. (KR)

Jagiaguwar, 1021 S. Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.jagiaguwar.com

Minus Tide, The - Anakuklosis, CD

Holy shit, here's a metalcore band that's actually good (*really* good—creative, technical, interesting) and not stale, reeking of machismo or relying on chuggy mosh breakdowns. If only ever other crappy metal/hardcore hybrid band could look toward The Minus Tide for inspiration. On this record, you'll find the technical greatness of Botch or Dillinger Escape Plan, the emotion of Converge and the dark heaviness of Disembodied or Unbroken, combined with a little something called originality (artistic license, whatever). Add some classic metal riffage and some weird song subjects for kicks, and you've got a winner. Speaking of the song subjects, I can't quite tell if this is a concept album of sorts, but these are a bunch of story-songs about strange space worlds and technology and new republics. Weird, scary, heavy, brutal and awesome. (MG)

Action Driver, 936 Orchard Park Road, Hurricane WV 25526, www.actiondriver.com

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

Calculators, The - Circuit Breaking Silence/Simplicity And Style, CD

Is new wave the next big thing *again*? If it is I wouldn't be surprised to find these dudes at the forefront. What? They broke up? Bummer. Had they been around in the '80s, they'd be fat, old, bald and playing sold out shows. Just think OMD with an attitude. (BN)

PrinceHouse Records, PO Box 410353, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.princehouserecords.com

Chiefs, The - Holly-West Crisis, enhanced CD

Here's an old-school LA punk band ('77-'82) from back in the day that some how slipped under my radar. This CD enhanced with live video and was originally released by Flipside. They sound a little like the Clash and T.S.O.L. (DI)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

15.60.75 (The Numbers Band) - Jimmy Bell's Still In Town, CD

Far greater men than I would recommend this record. Legend has it that this 1975 live performance directly inspired Akroyd and Belushi to create the Blues Brothers. David Thomas of Rocket From The Tombs/Pere Ubu is behind this rerelease. What could I possibly say that would speak louder than those two facts? (RR)

Hearpen Records, PO Box 4, Utica, PA 16362

Flux Of Pink Indians - The Fucking Cunts Treat Us Like Pricks / Taking A Liberty, CD

In 1984, Flux of Pink Indians found 14 ways to fire anacho-political themes in your face with *The Fucking Cunts Treat Us Like Pricks*. Lots of hardcore punk, full of guitar feedback and berating/shouting. The British act couples the original album with that year's three-track 12" single *Taking A Liberty*. (EG)

One Little Indian Records, 34 Trinity Crescent, London SW17 7AE, UK, www.indian.co.uk

*** Jawbreaker - Dear You, CD**

The infamous record that destroyed one of the best bands ever has new life, transformed from a regrettable mistake into a classic by a new generation of fans. Those of us who remember the tumult that accompanied *Dear You's* release can only marvel at how perspective changes over time. At least, though, the world is making peace with *Dear You*, Jawbreaker's slick-sounding major-label debut. So what's new on the rerelease? Well, only two things: the video for "Fireman" and a studio version of the song "Shirt." The rest of the bonus tracks ("Into You Like A Train," "Sister," "Friendly Fire" and "Boxcar") are

available on Jawbreaker's b-sides comp *etc*. The liner notes are expanded a bit, with new photos accompanying each song, including an eerie one of Kurt Cobain sporting a Jawbreaker shirt. With its big guitars, subdued bass and unraspy vocals, the record itself is a departure from other Jawbreaker releases, and the band were called sellouts because of it. But *Dear You's* sound has been replicated by thousands of bands since, and consequently, this record manages to stay timely nearly a decade after its release. That timeliness is emphasized by "Friendly Fire," a song about fans' negative reactions to Jawbreaker's signing. It's especially fitting now that people's antipathy toward *Dear You* has alleviated; it's like having a fight with your partner, and you can only talk about how it hurt your feelings once the dust settled. "Friendly Fire" is a perfect coda for *The Record That Could Have Been*. It's a *good* record—not their best—but good. It's about time the world realized that. (KR)

Blackball Records, 2745 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103, www.blackballrecords.com

*** Kukl - The Eye, CD**

A reissue of Bjork's pre-Sugarcubes music project, Kukl. It's a lot less polished than her later stuff, and she sounds like a braying donkey during some of the parts. Formed in 1983 in Bjork's home of Reykjavik, Kukl combined elements of punk rock, art-house jazz and experimental forms. *The Eye*, the band's sophomore effort, was originally released on Crass Records in 1984, was re-released the first time in 1997 and most recently in 2002. Chaotic and loosely structured, Kukl tears through eight tracks on *The Eye* with a desperate and erratic fierceness. (JG)

One Little Indian Records, 34 Trinity Crescent, London SW17 7AE, UK, www.indian.co.uk

*** Kukl - Holidays In Europe, CD**

This mid-'80s pop/experimental band features the infantile brilliance of the Icelandic princess we all adore, Björk, as well as the kooky, desperate vocals of Einar Orn. The songs (all unlabeled on the packaging) vary from sophisticated wack to preposterous junk. Ramshackle drums pop amongst punchy trumpeting, insane nursery-rhyme piano jigs and abused keyboards. This is exactly the kind of music one would expect Björk to have created in her youth (after the Icelandic record she put out as a tot): seemingly political, vaguely genius, chaotically

secretive. Despite The Sugarcubes' silliness, Kukl ultimately pronounces itself as too undeveloped to be taken too seriously. (SP)
One Little Indian Records, 34 Trinity Crescent, London SW17 7AE, UK, www.indian.co.uk

Locust, The - S/T, CDEP

Even before they got distracted by their costumes, The Locust still sounded like they were about to lose their shit, and this reissue of their self-titled EP is the proof. But somehow it works for their hardcore, throwback style. (CC)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Out Hud / !!! - split, CDEP

If you missed out on the vinyl version of this when it came out in '99, so here's your chance to get the anti-analog version. This rerelease features the infant stages of what the bands were to become, interesting in that anthropological, disco-dance-punk kinda way. (AA)
Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Pere Ubu - One Man Drives While The Other Man Screams, Live Volume 2: Pere Ubu On Tour, CD

I know Ubu's reputation as an influential, groundbreaking, and vital US punk band, but I've never been able to dig them, and this record is no exception. Still, these are quality live recordings from 1978-1981, so fans more astute than I should be satisfied. (JC)

Hearpen Records, PO Box 4, Utica, PA 16362

*** Thrills - N.A.F.I.T.C. Original Boston Punk, 1977-1981, CD**

This great collection of a few studio tracks, demos and some live stuff documents this amazing piece of Boston history. Who knew that Boston had its own version of X (but not really X)? This girl can really belt it out with a no-frills punk-rock band to back her up. These folks live up to their single "Not Another Face In The Crowd." They don't make bands like this anymore. (DM)

Bacchus Archives/ Dionysus Records, PO Box 1975 Burbank, CA 91507, www.dionysusrecords.com



Demo-lition Derby: CD-Rs

Alex Atchley Experience, The - Pawesome, CDR

Super-short dance tracks that are a mish-mash of Casio-generated beats and breathy/whiney vocals. Thing is, it's not that bad. (CC)
<http://taae.qb.net>

* Archie And The Pukes - Pukes Corrupt Children, CDR

This CD is a lot of fun after the 25-minute track of silence then noise. But this is super tight, balls out, upbeat punk rock 'n' roll. This disc documents music from 1997 and from the future recorded in Andy Slob's basement. If stuff this good is coming out of his basement, what else does he have down there? Lookout! and Mutant Pop fans should not miss out on this one. Rock out with your cock out and pogo the night away. (DM)
Centsless Productions, 5945 Monticello Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45224, aslob@aol.com

Bad Ace - S/T, CDR

An extremely sophomoric-sounding band who has a lot to learn about playing hardcore—like it helps if the singer doesn't sound so ridiculous. Sadly, the best song was "Excitebike," the theme to the Nintendo classic. (MS)
www.badace.tk

Backhanders - Drinking The Profits, CDR

This is generic-sounding punk rock from Ireland. It's not good, and it's not horrible, it's just boring. (SJ)

1 Seaview Ave, East Wall, Dublin 3, Ireland

Birthday Suit - The Cat And The Cock, CDR

The thing about ambitious, spiraling 15-minute songs is that no one will want to listen to them if they sound exactly like the 14 minutes that preceded them. The Birthday Suit may have a lot of guitar pedals, but they certainly don't understand how to use them. (MS)

PO Box 1802, Harrisonburg, VA 22803

Blood Arm, The - S/T, CDR

Quirky and herky-jerky post-punk that's akin to The Fall. Cocksure enough that the first song is called "A Brilliant Debut." Good stuff. (JC)
www.thebloodarm.com

Carrier - S/T, CDR

Crispety, crunchedy rock that could out-jam any jam band if lyrics weren't so important to this Berkeley band. Singer Webster McBride is one funky songwriter. (SM)
1911 Oregon St., Berkeley, CA 94703,
www.thespinach.com/carrier

Carol Cleveland Sings- Christmas, CDR

Synth-driven takes on Christmas classics. Fun to make, horrible to listen to. (RL)
No contact information provided

Doug Funny And The Jokes - Let The Good

Times Roll EP, CDR

This is basically your average high-school band whose musical leanings seem to be heavily influenced by Simple Plan and Sublime. In a word: yuck. (MS)
thejokesrock@hotmail.com

Failed Silence- The EP, CDR

If "quick, progressive metal...labeled, 'monkey-core'" appeals to you, get this EP, but first, ask yourself, "why?" (RL)
www.failedsilence.com

Fried Chinese Donalds - S/T, CDR

Hard rock/punk with a thick Stooges-like guitar sound. Some songs are more jangly à la Husker Du. This is really good. (DA)
PO Box 42 Negaunee, MI 49866

Glorious Day - Welcome To The Front, CDR

Glorious Day present *Welcome To The Front*, a disc of cock rock noodling that has every member throwing in a lick, hook and solo here and there. A well-recorded demo and nice homemade jackets and CD sticker. (EA)
1532 24th Ave. A, Seattle, WA 98122

Glow, The - S/T, CDR

Three cool songs that range from powerpop to almost gospel soul music. Great singing and old school organ throughout. I'd like to hear more. (JC)
www.theglow.com

Horrorshow Malachicks, CDR

Basic, sloppy hardcore punk rock with attitude-filled lyrics. Basic yes, but still necessary today. (BC)
mohicanpunk@hotmail.com

Lonesome Wyatt And The Holy Spooks - The Accident, CDR

I'm not quite sure what to make of the name, but this is straight-ahead country like the old days. Good sound quality. (SJ)
514 W Doty St #207, Madison, WI 53703,
www.lonesomewyatt.com

* Minni-Thins, The - EP, 2xCDR

On the Minni-Thins website, there's a track listing for a recent mix tape made by the lead songwriter of the band. Not surprisingly, the tape includes tracks by Built To Spill, the Beach Boys, the Pixies, the Modern Lovers and Pavement—all clear influences to the Minni-Thins infectious and pop-heavy rock. After listening to these two discs at least a dozen times each, the addictive quality of the music and the overall greatness of this band can't be denied. The Minni-Thins have got "it," that ephemeral quality possessed by certain A-list actresses and pop stars, but in a darker and more complex form. Live, the intensity and

eerie depth of their sound is magnified, making these guys a sure bet the next time they pass through town. (JG)
www.minnithins.com

On A Safer Shore - Music Is Only Moving Air, CDR

Yawn. Overproduced screamy emo punk—the vocals are dead ringers for Simple Plan, Sum 41, etc. For a two-song demo, this is really produced...and boring. (KR)
www.onasafershore.com

Opposed, The - This America, mini-CDR

Tiny CD containing two old-school punk-rock romps that'll have you longing for the days long gone. I need a full-length from these guys now. (BN)
Kaleb Keefer, 2311 Ohio Ave., #4, Cincinnati, OH 45219,
www.theopposed.com

Rathole Sheikh, The - Ex-Spermdonator, CDR

Standard pop punk from a band who seems to have a sense of humor about themselves and their music. Most songs have some standout parts, but the production is so terrible most of the time that it's really hard to tell. (MS)
ratholesheikh@hotmail.com

Ruark - S/T, CDR

Solo acoustic album, featuring one dude, his guitar and a whole lotta heartache. Bluesy, folksy, sad, relationship songs that hold your attention. (AJ)
www.ruarkmusic.com

Sanguine Orchestration System, The - Winter Recordings, CDR

Awesome. One song reminds me of Black Heart Procession, the other of Radiohead. It has a good groove to it. (DA)
www.thesanguineorchestrationsystem.com

So The Story Goes - A Heart Felt Fire, CDR

Pretty good hardcore/emo band that switches from the pretty melodic to the heavier-edged. Reminds me of Lifetime or the Get Up Kids, but screamier. (KM)
No contact info provided

Spinto Band, The - Good Answer, CDR

I got dissonant chord progressions. You got harmonized bass line/vocal melodies. Get out your oxfords shirts! It's time for some hot, old-fashioned indie rock. (CC)
spintoband@hotmail.com

Sugarpot Gamelan, CDR

Charming, lo-fi singer/songwriter indie-pop. Jingly guitars, female vocals and sparse instrumentation make some romance on this four track-esque recording. Honest and pure—I back it. (BM)
sugarpotgamelan@yahoo.com

☿ Mirah - C'mon Miracle, CD

Mirah's sweet, sensitive voice carries her through songs loaded with acoustic guitars, shuffling rhythms and innocuous lyrics. The entire album has a threaded feeling of grief entwined in the melodies (and Mirah's innocent tone) but not like the kind for slitting your wrists—more like the kind for remembering past loves. My favorite track on the CD, "The Dogs Of B.A.," whimsically speaks of the rains in Buenos Aires. The wistful "We're Both So Sorry" plays like an adolescent's circular, endearing, pitiful, desperate logic. Soft, soothing, placid. (SP)
K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

Miscounduct - United As One, CD

Melodic hardcore from Sweden that leaves a lot to be desired. Too slick and with no element of danger, they'd probably be fun to see live, but the video on the CD proves otherwise. Just another 10th generation Bad Religion knock-off. (DH)
Union Records, 78 Rachel East, Montreal, Quebec, H2W 1C6, Canada,
www.unionlabelgroup.com; Side By Side Records, Carls Åbyvä, 48, S-691 33, Karlsgårda, Sweden, www.sidebysiderecords.se

Molar - The Time And Motion Studies, CD

2004: the year laptop rock exploded. Ten songs and 40 minutes of processed loops, effects and reverb. There is some bite here if you are tempted by electronica. I like the production on this CD. (DI)
False Walls, PO Box 146788, Chicago, IL 60614, www.falsewalls.com

Mondays Hero - Love Carries An Axe, CD

Professional-sounding emo/hardcore that I'd expect on one of the bigger labels. Frequent dual vocals, some screamed backups, some jerky rock rhythms, a nice bass sound. There are even a few standout guitar parts from the dual guitars. Equal Vision or Rev could do a lot worse. And have. (NS)
Lucid Records, 665 Timber Hill Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

Morifade - Domi-nation, CD

Long-winded and epic power metal that one could easily ride their horse through some Nordic mist to. Tons of guitar-gallops and Maiden-esque vocals. Heavy at points, but too melodic for this reviewer. I'd rather listen to this than The Darkness, that's for sure. (DH)
Candlelight USA, 707 Plymouth, Meeting, PA 19462, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Morris - A Person Of Interest, CD

A fairly bland combination of indie pop, rock and folk. There are a couple moments of promise like the upbeat ^{6th} song with its CCR type guitar part and "Stillborn" with the funky bass line, but most of the album comes and goes with little fanfare. (NS)
Red Stapler, 6903 Ridgedale Court, McLean, VA 22101-5105, www.redstaplerrecords.com

Motico - EP, CDEP

Minimalist, unstructured indie rock falling somewhere in between stylistic lo-fi and amateur slop. Although some songs have passing hooks and flashes of recovery, the good is wholly outweighed by the bad. Given some time, this band could develop into something worthwhile; as of now, "average" is a generous description. (BM)
Self-released, 243 Greene Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11238, www.motico.com

Mumbler - The Winter Of Our Discontent, 7"

Lyrics about depression, drinking and leaving town with standard punk drumbeat, muddled guitars and flat, off-key vocals that all equally spoil each song. Their playing drags; I bet it sounds faster in their heads, but it doesn't come across that way. (AJA)
Salinas Records, PO Box 20996, Perrdale, MI 48220

☿ My Disco - Collapse Of An Erratic Lung, 7"

If Gravity Records never existed, then this would be a breakthrough in a new noise sound. Instead, we have been treated with an excellent single done on super thick vinyl that sounds so damn good. About 30 sec-

onds into the first track, there is an assault of feedback and noise that will turn off the weak of stomach. Many years ago in college I was in a band somewhat similar to My Disco; we were loud, noisy and all over the place in our songs. I loved playing it, and it is apparent that My Disco does as well. The lyrics are almost a mockery of a genre, though I am sure it is unintentional. Like a great Swiz song, the simple lyrics are used sparingly and breathe of pain. "(me) hoping (you) will be the friend I thought you were behind my fucking back"—classic early emo, before it turned into a bunch of soft, crying momma's boys. (EA)

Crashing Jets, GPO Box 3341 Melbourne 3001, Victoria, Australia, www.crashingjets.com

Nailbiter – Abused, CD

Motorhead, D.R.I. and C.O.C couldn't be here tonight, but they all had sex and are proud to announce the birth of their three-headed baby, Nailbiter. All kidding aside, this triumphant blast of bile-soaked vocals and classic metal thrash is a mosh down memory lane that will satiate your inner demon. (PS)

Hardcore Holocaust Records, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Namelessnumberheadman – Your Voice Repeating, CD

Acoustic and indie-rock guitars meet with keyboards and DJ beats. A "divergent auditory cocktail"? I won't mention what the other ingredient is. These 11 "songs" seem too meandering and incomplete. There are few vocals and few memorable songs. Skip the cocktail and go for a Miller 40, \$2 out-the-door. (NS)

The Record Machine, 4240 Holly BSMI, Kansas City, MO 64111, www.therecordmachine.net

Nap Attack! – Choose Your Own Adventure, CDEP

Nap Attack lays down mathy, rhythmic and melodic complexity while still remaining tastefully centered around pop sensibility. The dynamic technicality put forth by this trio creates a sound much closer to that of a small orchestra. Well fit for fans of Dianogah, Tristeza and the Mercury Program. (BM)

Monosyllabic Records, PO Box 1192 Arcata, CA 95521, www.monosyllabicrecords.com

Narrator, The – Youth City Fire, CDEP

Discordant but catchy, Chicago's The Narrator sound a lot like stuff they are probably too young to remember the first time around. Clearly inspired by producer Greg Norman's previous work (Guided By Voices, 90 Day Men), The Narrator wind through the five songs on *Youth City Fire* with intensity and verve. (JG)

Flameshovel Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Natural Dreamers – S/T, CD

The Natural Dreamers concoct instrumental noise that ranges from short, kinetic bursts to longer spans of chaos. Songs go from having a faint hint of melody ("Cone Corner") to the loosely rhythmic, ethereal "The Singer," creating a tension between order and chaos felt throughout the album. (AJA)

Frenetic Records, PO Box 640434, San Francisco, CA 94164-0434, www.freneticrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gooder (JG)

Fugazi. Red Medicine. *Red Medicine* was the first Fugazi album I owned. I always had a preconception that Fugazi were more straight-forward, but this album changed any ideas I had about them. Their roots were there in the record, but there was guitar experimentation that sounded almost like Sonic Youth laid over a more aggressive rhythm. *Red Medicine* managed to defy labeling and went farther out than most punk rock bands were doing.

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

The Monsignors. Are You There God? It's Us, The Monsignors. Back in my formative musical years, I was a metal-lover playing in a ska band. It was fun playing shows, but no band that we played with ever struck me the way that The Monsignors did. Completely hilarious (but with a brain), they blurred the lines between punk, ska, melodic rock and metal flawlessly, creating excellent pop music with an edge. The three horn players were the perfect accent to the already great pop-rock songs, and when the double bass drums kicked in, you knew that something unique was happening. *Are You There God...* was their only full-length (though they did have a double 7" with a great activity book) and was released on Chicago label Harmless Records in the late '90s to little fanfare, save for those who knew the band's reputation for a great live show or had heard one of their earlier, small-format vinyl releases. The catchy nature of the record easily shines through what sounds like a rushed recording (due to its muddy sound), but it's not bad to the point of being unlistenable. In fact, it just helps it sound more punk, if you ask me. I'm sure that this CD is still available from Harmless Records here in Chicago, so if you're looking to fill the gaps in the "Unknown Chicago" section of your collection, this is definitely one to check out. A staple of my youth, reminder of fun times and one album that I'll never get rid of.

Necronomicon – S/T, CD

Trashy, spazz-metal noodling out of Providence that twists epileptic drumming into dirge-filled grooves and back into progressive space-case shredding. With shrill vocals similar to Rhode Island brethren Arab On Radar, Necronomicon shoots to thrill with art-damaged metal trickery. (PS)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Nekromantix – Dead Girls Don't Cry, CD

I suppose it's now required that psychobilly bands adhere to a greaser version of the Ten Commandments. That's the only explanation I can come up with for a band with chops like Nekromantix choosing to coat their songs in an annoying veneer of cartoony horror punk and Count Chocula shtick. (RR)

Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Neptune – Intimate Lightning, CD

The use of certain comparisons is warned against when reviewing records. At the top of the list are "if Band A and Band B had a baby..." and "if Band A and Band B were thrown in a blender..." This record sounds like a swarm of insects making a baby with a band in a blender. (RR)

Mister Records, 199 South St. #5, Boston, MA 02130, www.misterrecords.com

☞ New Year, The – The End Is Near, CD

This is the real deal. Bedhead was the first band I saw grace the virginal new 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C., that cold and snowy in 1996. Three guitars in that giant new space never sounded so good. The New Year was an unexpected delight from Austin along the lines of the Butthole Surfers or Sixteen Deluxe. Fast forward eight years, add the wildcard that makes a new band in The New Year, 2004, complete with Chris Brokaw from Come and Codeine on drums. The lyrics are really gloomy and interesting to listen to, which reinforces its sleepy-narcotic nature. (DI)

Touch And Go Records, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, www.tgrec.com

☞ Newsom Joanna – The Milk-Eyed Mender, CD

Joanna Newsom's world is inside an old Victorian filled with sprightly and stubborn daydreaming ghosts who think they're still alive. So play her enchanted melodies at top volume from a distant room. Let her sometimes grating/sometimes elvish, high-pitched warble reverberate through the house, trailing the mosaic of fantastical tales from her spectral muses. The boots, the bones, the passing trains. "The rest of our lives will the moments accrue when the shape of their gone-ness will flare up anew/ Then we do what we have to do (re-loo-re-loo), which is all that you can do this side of the blue." Embroidered by her own hand at the harp, Wurliizer electric piano and harpsichord, *The Milk-Eyed Mender* is the quilt Newsom created when she attempted to stitch the mundane to the mystical. With the exception of a few pinpricks and missed hooks, she succeeds. (CC)

Drag City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, www.dragcity.com

☞ No Arms No Legs – The Sodomy Of Sound, 12"

The first thing that caught me about this record was the layout: The hand-screened sleeve and prints on the side B look great. This is definitely a screamo record, with its "angels and razorblades" type lyrics that are standard fare for the genre. I can't help but like it. The production is perfect. There are catchy riffs all over the place—they don't have three guitar players for nothing. "We Stop, You Clap, Don't Fuck It Up" has some Maiden-esque dueling leads. The record ends with a great three-part rock opera. What can I say? A band that can pull off the epic closer is OK by me. If you need a comparison, I would say Swing Kids mixed with some Maiden and a little bit of the newer hardcore sound. If you like your music chaotic, get this. (DA)

Limbless Records, 409 NE San Rafael, Unit 202, Portland, OR 97212, www.limbless.cjb.net

Northstar – Pollyanna, CD

This very nice, mainstream melodic punk release from a band from Huntsville will probably be marketed to boring indie-rock kids instead of the patch-donning punk youth who would more likely appreciate the band's honest simplicity and hooks. I highly recommend this catchy little sucker. (AE)

Triple Crown Records, 331 West 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

☞ Number One Fan – Compromises, CD

Is there enough time before the next Jimmy Eat World record comes out to give this Appleton, Wis., band first dibs at the mainstream trough? If there isn't and the kids just want their Jimmy, they'll be missing out on a band that does that same thing, whatever it is you emo sacks call it, where they rock with plenty of substance. They sing about love and find new ways to explore it, forcing the tracks on *Compromises* to think for themselves. They stay away from hyperbole and stay very much in the way of some of redeemable qualities of a fading genre. (SM)

Self-released, www.numberonefanonline.com

Numbers – In My Mind All The Time, CD

Numbers fans won't be disappointed: this is just more of the same. If you're into Gang of Four rip-off stuff, this record will rock your world. (JG)

Tigerbeat 6, PO Box 460922, San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Ocean As Mistress, The – In Ruins, CD

Melodramatic indie rock. The music alternates between solemn and somewhat upbeat, but the singer's voice and lyrics give everything a depressing turn. They're definitely a talented bunch of musicians, but this is the last thing I want to listen to on a warm, sunny day. (NS)

Zero Velocity, c/o Brendan Burns, 609 Belgian Drive, Bear, DE 19701, www.zeroveLOCITYrecords.com

Ode – On My Way to Learn, CD

This Balkan mostly male band plays melancholy rock seemingly influenced by bands like Soundgarden, Radiohead and Tool. The melodies are dauntingly slow and make a good match for the lead vocalist's



deep, hearty wail. Most interesting is the violin and often timeless use of classical influences. Brooding without being pretentious. (SP)
Self-released, www.odeband.com

☛ **Of Montreal – Satanic Panic In The Attic, CD**

My dad has a difficult time with the comedy of Bill Murray, loves the Beach Boys and tolerates some of the less demanding Beatles tracks. Where it all fits together or falls apart for him is in the level of silliness of the artist. Murray has too much of it, the Beach Boys have little and the Beatles do a lot of both. Of Montreal—of Athens, Ga.—would have been as irksome as a human-tuned dog whistle to my dad before *Satanic Panic In The Attic*. Kevin Barnes took his ever-changing lineup all over the map in terms of experimentation. He over-dubbed until it turned into under-dubbing, slipping unnecessary skits or group theatrics into the heart of a song, disrupting the flow and making trouble for the song as a whole. The songs were always great, but lacking direction. This first release on Polyvinyl—impress that Barnes almost single-handedly recorded—gives the impression that he's navigating his genius-fueled crazy train with a straightened-out rearview mirror and a completely squeaky clean windshield for the first time. He's trimmed the fat, and we're left with a groovier, smarter T-bone. (SM)
Polyvinyl Record Co., PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Old Time Relijun – Lost Light, CD

I passed up some older Old Time Relijun at once because I didn't "get it." OTR is part Beat Happening and part Jon Spencer. You may say we already have *Sideway Soul*, but this is really good, and I "get it" now. Just sit back, relax and enjoy some lo-fi blues music. (DI)
K Records, PO Box 7154, Olympia, WA 98507, www.krecs.com

Oldham, Will – Seafarers Music, CDEP

Seafarers Music is Oldham's instrumental soundtrack to a movie about (you guessed it) sailors. A great record for kicking back to, with some fine acoustic guitar work and bass accompaniment. However, be warned: This is a four-track EP clocking in at just over 27 minutes. (RL)
Drag City, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, www.dragcity.com

On! Air! Library! – S/T, CD

Electronic vibes mesh with lovely, soft-spoken and sometimes gut-wrenching waves of female and male vocals. The overall mood is drowsy, but not asleep, bouncy, but not ecstatic. Mostly steadily paced tunes with semi-interesting lyrics and a futuristic appeal to emotional technicalities. (SP)

Arena Rock Recording Company, 242 Wythe Ave., Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.arenarockrecordingco.com

☛ **One AM Radio – A Name Writ In Water, CD**

Ethereal, soothing, rain-spattered and generously understated, this CD will have you forlornly gazing at the sky. Hrishikesh Hirway's charming little-boy vocals course through each of his gems like crystalline water through an angel's pout. The most memorable tracks, (the instrumental) "Shivers," "Buried Below" and "What You Gave Away," throb with an unpretentious sentimentality that deflects even the

soorest puss. Hirway uses electronic devices, acoustic guitars, clinging violins and clinky drums to convey a thoughtful melodrama replete with tragic losses and starry hopes. A suave effort. (SP)
Level Plane Records, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

One Inch Punch, The – Horsehead Nebula, CD

This album of long-winded, mainly instrumental stoner rock songs incorporates some too scarcely used screaming vocals. They should've used them more; they gave the songs another much-needed dimension. Nevertheless, the record has its moments. (AJA)
Collective Records, 3825A Humphrey, St. Louis MO, 63116, www.collectiverecords.com

☛ **One Reason – All Rivers Run South, All Roads Lead Home, CD**

Funny how some records catch you off-guard when you least expect it. Plan It X Records has been putting out cheap CDs for a long time, and I expected another disc that I enjoyed, but wasn't gonna be long-term excited about. Generally, bands that have great songs and a great recording tend to want to hand it over to a bigger label. That said, One Reason has a big sound, and the sound on this is top-notch. Either they love the DIY attitude of Plan It X, or they couldn't get anyone else to put this out. The tracks would appeal to those who like the guitar power and emotion of No Idea Records who also dig the poppy side of J Church. Against Me! and One Reason would make a perfect show. Ten tracks, along with a few change ups, both slow and upbeat, are just enough not to let things get redundant. The male and female vocal mix is always a hit in my house from the Rezillos, X, Blatz and now One Reason. Contender for top 10 of the year for sure, *All Rivers Run South...* will definitely be worth your \$5. (EA)
Plan It X South, 5810 W. Willis Road, Georgetown, IN 47122-9177, www.plan-it-x.com

☛ **One Ring Zero – As Smart As We Are, CD**

How One Ring Zero got some of the best, modern literary minds (Margaret Atwood, Paul Auster, Dave Eggers, Denis Johnson) to contribute the quirky, sinister and hilarious lyrics needed to match their eccentric sound is beyond me. But it's not the only notable thing about Michael Hearst and Joshua Camp's outfit. The music, which moves in its own literary circles with appearances on *This American Life* and live performances with Paul Auster, is everything the *Fiddler On The Roof* soundtrack had the potential to be. An amazing collection of tales (about everything from houseplants to Frankenstein) bursting with an irresistible assortment of eclectic instruments that sound like they came from the dusty cove of a vaudeville theater—toy piano, accordion and glockenspiel—firing off like neurons plugged into a preternatural sense of song structure. A cocktail party for your left brain. (CC)
Soft Skull Press, 11 Bond St., Brooklyn, NY 11217, www.softskull.com

Orphans, The – Everybody Loves You When You're Dead, CD

It's no surprise that The Orphans are from the LA area. The surprise is that this came out in 2004, not 1979. Raunchy, old-school femme-fronted punk rock played with the enthusiasm and urgency needed to make this shit work. Fun on a bun. (JC)
Unity Squad Records, PO Box 1235, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.unitysquadrecords.com

Orphans, The – Drowning Cupid, CD

They'll never be confused with The Orphans (reviewed above), but they may be confused with Imperial Teen as they play a similar cut of fun, bubblegum dance music. There's a bit of Brainiac in here too, specifically in the quirky guitar playing. I'm a sucker for music like this. (JC)
Goodnight Records, 690 Murphy Ave #B8, Atlanta, GA 30310, www.goodnightrecords.com

Orquesta Del Desterto – Dos, CD

I picture Enid's art teacher from *Ghost World* listening to this record. A lot of ganja, Latin guitars and granola were undoubtedly present at the *Dos* recording sessions. Now where are my Replacements records? (RL)
Meteorcity, PO Box 40322, Albuquerque, NM 87196, www.meteorcity.com

Out Of Reach – Neverending, CD

Out Of Reach plays the Fat Wreck sound with some metal riffs to stand out more. This is big-time production, and the pop smacks, and the drums thump. Good stuff that would make any fan of the genre smile. (EA)
Goodwill Records, C.P. 15319, 00143 Roma Laurentino, Italy, www.goodwillrecords.net

Overprivileged, The – Cheap Plastic Crap, CD

The Overprivileged play no-frills hardcore punk with gasoline vocals and self-righteous lyrics. Throw in some gang vocals and a couple of blast beats, and you got yourself an average hardcore record. (KM)
Amp Records, www.amprecords.com

Oxford Collapse – Some Wilderness, CD

Fast, frenzied, jumpy music (guitars, drums, organs and bass) paired with equally panic-stricken male vocals, though the songs sound more promising than the music. (But how can you live up to "Totally Gay, Totally Fat?") Each song blends into the other, but the same kicky energy remains at full force. (SP)
Kanine Records, PO Box 404, Prince Street Station, New York, NY 10012, www.kaninerrecords.com

Paintbox – Cry Of The Sheeps, 7"

I really hope these guys aren't singing about raping babies or something, because this shit rules. This Japanese band rips through three anthemic, gravel-throated, thrashy and catchy hardcore punk-rock songs. They were courteous enough to sing some of the choruses in English, too. Think Bad Brains: frantic, musically adept and indiscernible. (RR)
Prank Records, PO Box 410892, San Francisco, CA 94141-0892, www.prankrecords.com

Paper Champions, The – S/T, CDEP

The Paper Champions play raga-length, Sunny Day Real Estate-derived indie rock. Nothing you haven't heard a million times before, in a style that has become all too predictable. (RL)
Self-released, www.thepaperchampions.com

☛ **Paradise Boys – The Young And The Guest List, CD**

A continual slap of drums and blooping synth notes pushes the songs on *The Young And The Guest List* to a pressure point that happens to be located right in the center of a dark, warping dance floor. Clean, peppy guitar strokes light up the relentless beating and the bleating.

Reviewer Spotlight: Don Irwin (DI)

SWA, Winter. Released in 1989, SWA's fourth record featured the third incarnation of the band and is an amazing document as Phil Van Dyne picks up guitar duties for the first time. *Winter* allows drummer Greg Cameron and vocalist Merrill Ward, former co-host of the *IRS Cutting Edge Happy Hour*, to cut loose. Cameron is a heavy-hitter, but should not be overlooked because he'll leave you with ringing ears. The real treat is that former Black Flag bassist Chuck Dukowski can shine in all his well-earned glory. The guitar continues in the Ginn-Juncosa vein, but you can totally zone out everything but the bass and just focus on the greatest Minute-Flag fourth stringer. (Andrew Weis was a trip, but Dukowski invented punk rock.) Live, SWA rocked BeBop Records in Reseda, Calif., as I watched Chuck work the frets and strings on his Fender while his head jerked back and forth during "Monster" and "Mass Confusion." Merrill was an engaging performer. The last time I saw SWA play, the PA cut out after the first or second song, but there was no stopping this band. Merrill was wearing a long-sleeve tie-dyed T-shirt (think the Dead's "Touch of Grey" era) singing along to "Bad Acid" without a PA. It's one of my fondest memories of an amazing band.

What's been on the turntable: Norah Jones, *Feels Like Home*; DJ Danger Mouse, *Grey Album*; The Beauty Pill, *The Unsustainable Lifestyle*; The Evens And Black Eyes, *Live*.

Founding member Jeff Fare once shared a band (The Calculators) with Luke Jenner and Vito Roccoforte of The Rapture. You don't need a press kit to figure that shit out. (SM)

PrinceHouse Records, PO Box 410353, San Francisco, CA 94141, www.princehouserecords.com

Passage – The Force Field Kids, CD

An abrasive stab at artsy, hip-hop-electro fusion. The beats and socially political lyrical content are commendable, while the vocal delivery lacks. When it comes to verbal flow, I prefer it smooth and tight. Passage stumbles between monotone hymns and stanzas he can't quite seem to keep up with. (BM)

Anticon Records, www.anticon.com

Peachfuzz – About A Bird, CD

Peachfuzz plays energetic rock with a '60s pop influence, while drifting at times into alternative-rock territory. Some of the album is tedious, some of it memorable, but overall nothing to write home about. (AJA)

Orange Sky / Dionysus Records, PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507, www.dionysusrecords.com

Pedro The Lion – Achilles Heel, CD

"Bands with managers are going places," croons David Bazan with his lackadaisical style at the opening of *Achilles Heel*. He comes across as the quiet guy who's secretly shit-talking about everyone in his mind. Rockstar wannabes bear the brunt of it in the slow opener "Bands With Managers." The tempo picks up on track two, "Foregone Conclusions," which has an almost Britpop feel. It's a sound that seemingly pervades *Achilles Heel*, which doesn't wallow like its predecessor, *Control*, a record I don't recommend you buy for any newlywed friends. Also unlike its predecessor, *Achilles Heel*'s songs aren't all part of a linear story that begins with the first track and ends with the last. The vocals also seem more ambitious here, especially in harmonies ("Keep Swinging") and when they reach for the upper registers in "Bands With Managers." The Britpop sound takes an almost Beatles-eque turn in "Keep Swinging," but the Beatles never wrote about shitting the bed. Even though the record doesn't have the crushing darkness of *Control*, naysayers will easily dismiss this as indie mope-rock. But it's catchy, has nice, unexpected musical twists, and it's really easy to settle into its pleasing, subdued mood. (KR)

Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

Pepper – In With The Old, CD

This is a quasi-reggae/ska band that brings to mind Sublime or old Police. According to the onesheet, it was recorded at 311's studios by 311's producer (not a good thing in my book). The production may carry them to the charts like 311, but this release is predictable and toothless. Everything that was good about old reggae and ska seems to have been filtered out. But I bet the frat-boys will like it. (JJG)

Volcom Entertainment, 1740 Monrovia Ave., Costa Mesa, CA 92627 www.volcoment.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

Hank Williams III & Assjack, Bootleg #3. In September 2002, Hank Williams III recorded eight demo versions of tunes for what was supposed to be his first official rock album. He'd entered the commercial-music marketplace three years earlier as a country artist, the third in a line of Williams men to do so. But Hank III had always been a rocker at heart, having played in various punk and metal bands while growing up. Armed with only drummer Joe Fazzio, Hank overdubbed all the guitars and vocals for *Bootleg #3* to create his vision of what rock 'n' roll played by a cow punk, hellbilly, ne'er-do-well should sound like. Mix the music of Black Flag, The Melvins, Napalm Death and The Misfits together, sprinkle on some cocaine, add way too much weed, a healthy dose of outsider pride and outlaw irreverence, and you get instant classics like "Redneck Ride," "Gravel Pit" and "Tennessee Driver." Unfortunately, Curb Records didn't see it that way. Hank's relationship with them had been on thin ice from day one. Upon hearing these tracks, the label refused to release them. Over the past two years, bad talk, legal shenanigans and ill will on both sides have caused Curb to stop releasing any of Hank's material whatsoever. *Bootleg #3* was available for a while via Hank's website, but, currently, the only way to get a copy is at one of his—infrequent—live shows. Do whatever you have to—cheat, steal or maim—to get a copy of this CD.

Love 'em: Napalm Death, *Noise For Music's Sake*; Creedence Clearwater Revival, *Greatest Hits*; The Germs, (*MIA*); AC/DC, *Back In Black*; X, *Los Angeles*.

Perv, The – Pieces Of You, 7"

This is totally ripping pogo-punk revival shit, speeding down the same road as The Briefs and The Stitches. Four super-melodic songs all played with really high energy. The recording is great, it's packaged in a killer die-cut sleeve, and it's my favorite record of all I reviewed this issue. (JC)

Wood Shampoo Records, PO Box 27801, Las Vegas, NV 89126, behemothrec@yahoo.com

Petit Vodo – A Little Big Pig With A Pink Lonely Heart, CD

This French one-man band plays new blues and garage rock sung in broken English. In comparison, John Spencer and Beck are far cooler, but there is plenty of room for more white superhuman musicians obsessed with blues in this world. I'm just not in a hurry to find any more. (TK)

Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Monseigneur, 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Petracovich – Blue Cotton Skin, CD

Well, put on the chamomile tea, and let's talk about our feelings. Two-person band makes boring, self-indulgent dream-pop muzak. All drum machines and sappy overlapping vocal melodies. No fight, no guts, no balls. Yuck. (AJ)

Red Buttons Records, PO Box 150112, San Rafael, CA 94915, www.redbuttonrecords.com

Piebald – All Ears, All Eyes, All The Time, CD

They Mark Hamilled themselves. You can't make your *Star Wars* (or *Return Of The Jedi* or *The Empire Strikes Back*) before you decide to hang up the spikes and expect to be so golden ever again. There will always be projects like *Laserhawk*—as Hamill learned—to remind you of that. Releasing anything after 2002's *We Are The Only Friends We Have* was going to be a setback. Travis Shettel, with his revived throat, does show some intriguing compass points for the band's next transgression with his ghost-town, barroom piano playing in "Haven't Tried It Yet" and "Part Of Your Body Is Made Out Of Rock." But he lost some of his cleverness, and the novelty of Shettel's addictively playful delivery loses its luster often when the reach is too high. It's all right to hear him try the stretch once or twice, but then it gets to be like watching a turtle get off its back. For as jammed as the last album was, this one is the case of the missing hooks. (SM)

Side One Dummy, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles, CA, www.sideonedummy.com

Pig Destroyer – Painter Of Dead Girls, CD

A collection of early Pig Destroyer tracks remastered and served up by the folks at Robotic Empire. This band rewrote the grindcore handbook with 2001's masterpiece *Prowler In The Yard*, so do yourself a favor and check out the excellent past recordings of the most important band in grind today. (DH)

Robotic Empire, PO Box 4211, Richmond, VA 23220, www.roboticempire.com

Pillsbury, Marianne – The Wrong Marianne, CD

Marianne Pillsbury sounds like a real '90s rock chick, like a cross between Tracy Bonham and Liz Phair. In fact, the first track on her new album, "Supersize," sounds a lot like something off of Phair's *Whipsmart*. With that said, it pretty much follows that Pillsbury's sound is a blend of naughty, tough, bitchy and fun, but all in the spirit of rock, of course. Her seemingly soft side is briefly shown on the truly caustic

"Unintentional," (about a crappy relationship) when she sings "doo, doo, doo, doo, doo" like a '60s Lisa Loeb. But even when she's being irreverent, Pillsbury can't help but sound bubble-gummy cool with her thin-sharp vocals, which makes this delightfully pessimistic woman all the more pleasurable to experience. (SP)

Self-released, www.mariannepillsbury.com

Pitty Sing – S/T, CDEP

I put this CD in and thought I had time-warped back into 1984. It's actually really good, with crystalline production and '80s-style synths. The track "Robots" will repeat in your head over and over. (SJ)

Or Music LLC, 37 W. 17th St., New York, NY 10011, www.ormusic.com

Post-Haste – Untitled, CD

I want to like this record. It's a catchy kind of modish rock with some upbeat, indie-rock overtones. It's good, but it could be great. I think these guys were probably overanxious and could have solidified their sound before recording. With some more time and better production, these kids could be great. (DM)

Ionik Recordings, 130 S. 22nd St., 2F, Philadelphia, PA 19103, www.ionikrecords.com

Premonitions Of War – Left In Kowloon, CD

Not your typical Victory Records band here. I hear maybe a little Neurosis influence as well as a bit of metal. There are also some weird, industrial-sounding parts mixed in. Definitely the most diverse Victory band I have heard. Not bad. (TK)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Primate 5 – 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-APE!, CD

Any garage band can put on ape suits and add extra gimmicks, but this incredible Seattle band also happens to rock as well. Surf, rockabilly and garage antics ensue as these wild gorilla rockers from Seattle take the listener on a fast-paced sonic journey that couldn't be more fun. (AE)

Dizzy Records / Hubba Hubba Recordings, hubbahubbarecordings@hotmail.com

Pro-Pain – Fistful Of Hate, CD

Rising from the ashes of the '80s crossover punk-metal band the Crumsuckers is Pro-Pain, with their eighth record. Somehow for 12 years and countless tours I've always confused this band with Rob Halford's Fight of the same era. Needless to say, after seeing the name Crumsuckers/Pro-Pain so many times, an investigation was a necessity. It makes you wonder what the first seven sounded like. It's your usual two-guitar assault with bass and drums interplaying on different songs. Is it good? Yes. Excellent? Maybe, but not life-changing. Now if I only knew where I got the idea Rob Halford was in this band... (DI)

Candlelight USA, PO Box 707, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Proof – S/T, CD

At their most distinctive, these guys function like a post-punk jam band, with catchy guitar work, harmonics and swirling riffs that embody longing with a loopy otherworldliness. The underwhelming vocals feel tacked on, but the compositions are much more cohesive and hew together better than many indie rock instrumental bands. (DAL)

Pidgeon English Records, PO Box 12561, Raleigh, NC 27605, www.pidgeonenglish.com

**Puget Sound / Kid Blunt – split, CD**

Four tracks from each of these Irish bands. The Puget Sound play an interesting style of off-kilter, experimental, melodic punk, and Kid Blunt do a screamy hardcore/punk full of melodic, yet mathy, breakdowns. (MG) Rejected Records, 15A Wicklow St., Dublin 2, UK, www.rejectedireland.cjb.net

☞ Pulley – Matters, CD

Maybe enough time has passed since the Epifit SoCal skate-punk outbreak of the '90s. Maybe it's the warm weather. Maybe I'm nostalgic for Scared Straight and old Ten Foot Pole. Whatever the reason, I'm enjoying this Pulley CD quite a bit, despite avoiding all of their previous releases. I'm not sure who's left over from their old lineups, but Scott Radinsky is still plugging away with a bunch of talented musicians who know how to write some fast, slick and catchy punk tunes. You got a problem with that? There's still something compelling about Scott's voice. For some reason it sounds so Southern California. I'm sure people will like this or write it off with little hesitation, but at this moment in time, I miss that old Epitaph sound. While I don't see this as a huge growth in their sound, it's still a good sound. (NS) Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.epitaphrecords.com

Puritan – Come Sit By the Lake Tonight, CD

Puritan play gentle, but strange and dark pop music, with odd instrumentals from seemingly obscure string instruments that are probably odd synth concoctions. In any case, these songs are strikingly daring. (AE) Skinny Chest, 194 Muliwai Drive, Wailuku, HI 96793, www.skinnychest.com

Put-Downs, The – No Worse Off, CD

You've got to admire a band that can confidently cover both Scared Of Chaka and Dwight Yoakum. This rip-roaring new record by the Texas trio (that features Paul J of the Motards) delivers one solid up-tempo song after another that calls you to mosh in your cowboy boots. (DAL) Super Secret Records, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767, www.supersecretrecords.com

Quinimine – Like Pistons For Engines, CD

Quinimine's mournful mix of acoustic guitars, strings, xylophone and organ is a eulogy for an American character lost to commercialization and a document of the interior monologue that follows the decay. A beautiful, meaningful mix of folk and country elements. (CC) Grey Flat Records, PO Box 477458, Chicago, IL 60647, www.greyflat.com

Race, The – Rose, CDEP

The Race does some good in multilayering instrumental and electronic sounds, creating short and introspective sonic snapshots rather than epic musical therapy sessions. Their intertwining loops of drum beats, guitars, and vocals are minimal, but not sparse-sounding, giving rise to a pretty-sounding EP. (AJA) Flameshovel Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee, #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Radio Beats, The – Blow You Up, 7"

Balls out, in-your-face rock (Motorhead would be proud) from the back-ass woods of West Virginia. Three guys making a lot of great noise during these four tunes of angst and love. (BC) Big Neck Records, PO Box 8144, Reston, VA 20195, www.bignedrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Scott Jones (SJ)

NoMeansNo, The Worldhood Of The World (As Such). The sleeping giant has awoken. Yes, Canada's finest are finally touring again, and I am so there. In honor of this, I decided to review one of NoMeansNo's more overlooked albums. *Worldhood* is actually one of my favorites in the NoMeansNo catalog. It's similar to their classic *Wrong* with its shorter, punchier songs. I love their longer songs as well, but this album stands up on its own. John and Rob Wright have to be one of the tightest rhythm sections in the world. I guess they have to be, because the two brothers have been playing together forever. John's drumming never ceases to amaze me, with his intricate parts that maintain an intense impact when necessary. I don't know if it was intended or not, but the lyrics revolve around the themes of humanity and society. "Humans" shows what we have evolved into while "Predators" remind us that we are still animals. "I've Got A Gun" exposes what happens when society goes wrong, while "My Politics" tells us that hate is just human nature. Finally "The Jungle," with its almost Caribbean feel, is simply a metaphor for society, as in Guns n' Roses' "Welcome To The Jungle." Maybe not every single song falls into this concept, but I do feel that there's an overall thread holding this album together. At any rate, I've got a show to catch.

Also listening to: Radiohead, *Hail To The Thief*; Guided by Voices, *Bee Thousand*; Wire, *Send*; The Horror, *First Blood Parts I And II* (reviewed this issue); Cannibal Corpse, *Gore Obsessed*.

Radio Clamor – A Loud And Continuous Uproar Of Many Human Voices, CD

An interesting, if not a bit monotonous, look at how people deal with death varies in different cultures. The death penalty lecture comes off a bit preachy, but don't all spoken-word ventures? (MS) Clamor, PO Box 20128, Toledo, OH 43610, www.clamormagazine.org

Rag Men – S/T, CD

Semi-tolerable tough-guy metalcore. Lots of lyrics about standing up for yourself and not letting the struggles of life get you down. To borrow a phrase from Black Flag, "I've heard it before/ Don't wanna hear it again." (AJ) Eulogy Recordings, PO Box 24913, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33307, www.eulogyrecordings.com

Rajoitus – Discography, CD

Forty-one tracks of pure Finnish hardcore mayhem from...Sweden. While tough to get through in one sitting (c'mon, it's 41 fucking tracks long) this headache-inducing, speaker-blowing scream-fest is a strong example of the European hardcore scene, if only for the head strong and hardcore fanatics. (BN) Hardcore Holocaust Records, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Rainer Maria – Anyone In Love With You (Already Knows), CD

The only time that I can distinctly remember almost falling asleep standing up was when I saw Rainer Maria. A live DVD/CD that is pretty uncalled for. They play nice pop music that allows hardcore boys to have something in common with their girlfriends. I smell a cash-in. (DH) Polyvinyl Records, PO Box 7140, Champaign, IL 61826-7140, www.polyvinylrecords.com

Real Losers, The – Go Nutzoid!, 7"

You'd almost expect Billy Childish to be in this band. At least that's what I've come to anticipate when I hear an English lo-fi garage-punk band. However, The Real Losers distinguish themselves from their talented countryman with their own take on hooky, fun, trashy everything-way-the-fuck-in-the-red-punk. (RR) Wrench Records, BCM Box 4049, London, WC1N 3XX, UK, www.wrench.org

Redfield – The Hellfire Club, CD

Redfield play affable emo-core, marred by vocals that are *way* too forced. It has potential, but there's too much of an overt commercial drive to the production to give it the rawness it seems to be seeking. (AE) Grave Records, PO Box 27577, Tempe, AZ 85285, www.gravenine.com

Redline – Portrait Of A Mirror Image, CD

Redline mixes hardcore, grind and metal riffs nicely to make one intensely angry sound. The lyrics are a little stupid, but you can't tell what he's singing anyway. For angry tough dudes into Hatebreed who want a little more diversity musically, but don't want to listen to sXe screamo bands. (TK) GSR, Ecrivissestraat 41, 6125 AW Obbicht, The Netherlands, www.gsrmusic.com

Remembering Never – Women And Children Die First, CD

For fans of the breakdown, Remembering Never provide an entire album's worth, loosely tied together by forgettable riffs. I'd rather their singer focused on a new Until The End record. At least that band has breakdowns with something worthwhile in-between them. (DH) Ferret Music, 167 Wayne St., #409, Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

☞ Rescue – Volume Plus Volume Plus, 2xCD

This CD reminds me of the movie *10 Things I Hate About You*. I'm a little embarrassed to say I like it, but damn, it was a great movie. These guys play poppy emo tinged with math rock and a bunch of really cool recording tricks like perfectly timed throat clearing for effect. It just may be a little too sugary and whiney for my tastes. Yet I can't stop being impressed. Shhh, don't tell anyone. (TK) Forge Again Records, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgagainrecords.com

☞ Retisonic – Return To Me, CD

Retisonic follows up its debut EP of 2002 with an equally strong long-player. You might not recognize their name, but the members of Retisonic have been around the block many times: Jason Farrell (Bluetip, Swiz), Joe Gorelick (Garden Variety) and Jim Kimball (J.Majesty). Because they've been at this awhile, they've honed their skills, and *Return To Me* shows that: tight, melodic D.C.-style post-punk with excellent vocal harmonies. *Return To Me*'s guitars and vocal harmonies reign supreme, but they're ably backed by the pounding, forceful rhythm section. Check out "Externalized" and "Let Me Be" for choice cuts, but the best one by far is "Absolutely You." It's a perfect five-minute sampler of what Retisonic plays and what their strengths are, especially the subtle intro, with its catchy, quiet guitar work and vocal harmonies. The song has a feeling like there's something big on the horizon, and it's the soundtrack to that arrival. If it were in a movie, the quiet intro would play as the protagonist gathers his last few things in his now-empty apartment. Just as we watch him leave and the door close, the song kicks in. It's hard to explain. Just get this record. You won't be sorry. (KR) Silverthree Sound Recordings, PO Box 3621, Fairfax, VA 22038, www.silverthree.com

Riot-A-Go-Go – A Piece Of It, CD

Pretty solid debut full-length from this female-fronted punk trio. They draw from a wide range of influences and mix up the styles and tempos quite a bit, making it hard to pin down any easy comparisons. However, after a few listens I don't really hear a distinctive sound coming from them, either. (JC) Self-released, www.riotagogo.com

RJD2 – Since We Last Spoke, CD

It's difficult to review an album when every song is plagued by voiceovers obnoxiously blaring "RJD2 promotional copy. Available May 2004 on Definitive Jux Recordings." Although I was able to make out some of this Ohio vinylsmith's razor-sharp cuts, the depth of this recording was construed by anti-piracy banter. (BM) Definitive Jux, 451 Greenwich St., #507, New York, NY 10013, www.definitivejux.net

R'N'R - The Infamous And Notorious, CD

A combination of early '80s hardcore and '70s classic rock (hardcore stoner rock?). These two genres don't seem a likely combination, but R'N'R pulls it off, with anthemic arena-rock guitar and hardcore intensity. Anyone who dislikes Led Zeppelin or AC/DC probably shouldn't buy this, however. (JIG)

Manic Ride Records, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.manicriderecords.com

Robot Ate Me, The - On Vacation, CD

A hypnotic two-disc record that will score your twisted nightmares and fanciful dreams. "On Vacation Part One" is straight historicore, like the Decemberists in theory, except TRAM is much more content with a historical fantasy scene involving Jesus, Hitler and some mad tongue action ("Jesus And Hitler"). If Tim Burton ever made a film about WWII, this would be the lurking soundtrack subtly revealing the lives of marionette puppets imprisoned in a concentration camp. The line, "It's my world, even if I'm insane" from "Crispy Christian Tea Time" best captures this first disc. "Part Two" is equally enjoyable in a more contemporary fashion, with mellow pop ballads about running away to nostalgia. Ryland Bouchard sings "Let's hold hands when we take off today/ I think I miss the way we used to be" so sweetly, you can feel his arms wrapped around you. It's that dang good. (AA)

Swim Slowly Records, PO Box 712464, San Diego, CA 92171, www.swimslowly.com

Rue - S/T, CD

Heavy hardcore with stoner-rock leanings, this is the musical equivalent of a jock. Every once and a while they'll surprise you, but for the most part you know exactly what to expect. (DH)

Shifty Records, PO Box 13056, Akron, OH 44334, www.shiftyrecords.com

Runner And The Thermodynamics - S/T, CD

This record is so good that I'm currently unable to listen to any of the other albums I gotta review. Combining the small block 327 growl of Detroit with psychedelic guitar licks and tinges of power-pop, Runner And The Thermodynamics' self-titled record is a fantastic update on early '70s rock. Playing in a style usually reserved for a four- to six-piece band is no problem for this trio. All formidable musicians, Runner And The Thermodynamics cut any excesses for a more stripped down approach. Guitarist and lead singer Marc Pinansky writes some top-notch lyrics (check "Damsels In Denim"), which makes the album's absence of a lyric sheet all the more frustrating. That setback aside, this is one stellar album. (RL)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Saving Rushmore - The Further We Stay, CDEP

Australia's answer to the new phenomenon of punk boy bands, Saving Rushmore play emo-pop in the vein of their U.S. counterparts, but with a little more of an edge to the songs and some faster tempos thrown in to keep the energy level high. Definitely not to be passed over. (AE)

Self-released, 7-36 Megalong St., Nedlands, Western Australia 6009, www.savingrushmore.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

V/A, Down In Front. If you know who Aaron Cometbus is, you are most likely aware of some of the bands he has been in. This CD just happens to be the "best of" of the Down In Front 4x7" comp that was released in 1999 on No Idea. It's got some of the best music from a lot of the bands Aaron has been in through the years: Redmond Shooting Stars, Sweet Baby, Pinhead Gunpowder, Cleveland Bound Death Sentence, The Blank Fight, Astrid Oto, and the Retard Beaters are a few bands on this CD. I only wish I could have picked up that 7" comp before they were all out of print. This is a very eclectic and soon to be classic compilation. The '50s style garage pop of "Don't Do That" by Sweet Baby is my favorite track on here. This is followed closely by the first track, "Just Like You" from the Redmond Shooting Stars. The cover of Bob Marley's "Redemption Song" by Shotwell Coho off their first 7" is also a nice touch. Some of the songs have been collected from other releases, but a lot of these are exclusively on this comp. Putting aside the literary and musical accomplishments of Aaron, this comp in itself is really noteworthy, and it is destined to be one of those classic punk-rock comps 10 years down the road. Get a hold of it from No Idea while you can.

What does my record player annoy my roommates with this month?

The Horny Mormons, *Play Goat Ropin'...* 'N' *Other Fine Ditties*; Bitchen, *The Night Life*, *The Tight Style*; Descendents, *Cool To Be You*; cLOUDDEAD, *Terr*; The Hunches, *Yes.No.Shutup*; Carrie Nations / This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, *split 7"*.

Scarred, The - Repression, CD

Watch out! It's 10 songs of bitter and pissed off punk rock. The sound here is like a cross between pop-punk and an old punk-rock band. The vocals aren't working a fake British accent, which is a definite plus, but the music just isn't my thing. (KM)

Shogun 77 Records/self-released, PO Box 2433, Anaheim, CA 92814, www.thescarred.com

Scent Of Human History / Memory As Perfection - split, 12"

Quite a dynamic pairing, if I do say so myself. Scent Of Human History hail from Long Island and play convincing, screamy hardcore à la City Of Caterpillar, while Louisiana's Memory As Perfection are a bit more frantic and diverse, with their style varying between each track. If I were to pick a favorite, my money would be on Memory As Perfection, but both bands seem to be headed in the right direction. Recommended. (MS)

Waking Records 1803 Riverside Drive, 5M, New York, NY 10034, www.wakingrecords.com; McCarthyism 7209 25th Ave., Hyattsville, MD 20783, www.mccarthyism.org

Sceptic - Unbeliever's Script, CD

Some bands are meant to be chaotic in their approach, and unfortunately Sceptic isn't one of them. Their brand of contemporary Polish metal reminds me at times of later-era Death, but without the focus on an end product. Focus the attention on songwriting over technicality, and we could have something. (DH)

Candlelight USA, 707 Plymouth, Meeting, PA 19462, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Scharpling & Wurster - New Hope for the Ape-Eared, CD

Scharpling & Wurster's second installment of the best bits from their WFMU radio show. Whether he's interviewing hopeless rockstar wannabes, being berated by his father on-air or falling victim to an all-chocolate diet, Tom Scharpling plays the perfect straight man to his partner's absurd gags. (PS)

Stereoloffs, PO Box 1530, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, stereoloffs.com

Scharpling & Wurster - Rock, Rot, & Rule, CD

Record reviewing is an *exact* science, a task only held to the privileged few who can distinguish obtuse art from trite garbage with our impeccable sonic filters. This WFMU interview with self-appointed critic Ronald Thomas Clontle offers unbelievable insight from his upcoming book, *Rock, Rot, & Rule* that introduces a music-ratings system simply by: rock, rot or rule. Culled from the demographic of the Kansas coffeshop where he works and from his travels (Florida), he ensures the book is "the Ultimate Argument Settler." As his discussion with *The Best Show on WFMU* deejay Tom Scharpling progresses, irate listeners call in to challenge Clontle (excellently played by Superchunk's Jon Wurster) on his stances that The Madness invented ska, Neil Young rots (despite Clontle admitting that he has only heard Young's material after 1989), and Puff Daddy rules while The Beatles only rock ("because they had a lot of bad songs"). It's no *Trouser Press* for sure ("Is that the guy from Yo La Tengo?"), but way more fun than a closet full of Pitchfork reviewers. But to be cutting edge is to be ironic, so I give this record a *rot*. Only because there are no guitars. (VC)

Stereoloffs, PO Box 1530, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, www.stereoloffs.com

Schwervon! - Poseur, CD

A simple guitar/drums duo that has its flashes and its whiffs. "Bad Music" and title-track "Poseur" are body slams that take a second to recover from. The underdone guitar work and ready-when-you-are drumming make Major Matt's lyrics dent with a plaiting of Michael Stipe's somewhat jovial sobriety to a rural nonarticulation that puts a little more tenderness in them and covers the record's bare-bones moments where a third instrument should fit. As the record continues, Nan Turner, Major Matt's wife, begins to wear the vocal pants, pushing him from the forefront and decorating the songs with potpourri like she probably did their New York bathroom. The lo-fi version of this band is only one half of what it should be. It's cool that rehearsal times can be scheduled without even the use of a phone. It must make it easy to operate. Right now, if the band breaks up it means bigger problems than creative differences, but it doesn't have to be like that. Find a bassist and a second guitarist. They can always be fired. Two is the loneliest number. (SM)

Olive Juice Music, PO Box 20678, Tompkins Square Station, New York, NY 10009, www.olivejuicemusic.com

Scoville Unit - Everybody Knows, CD

Think sunny with just the requisite touch of despair. The adolescent vocals perfectly befit this Monkees kind of groove. If you enjoy ironic music that borrows from '60s sensibility, this is the band for you. Killer track: a cover of The Moody Blues' "Wildest Dreams." (SP)

Ernest Jenning Record Company, 68 Cheever Place, Apt. 2, Brooklyn, NY 11231, www.ernestjenning.com

Sevenout - Feast Of Eden, CD

Unbearably tacky alternative rock, a soundtrack perfectly suited for any Hallmark made-for-television teen-rebellion scene. "Now I'm getting to know you/ There's no way you're so hot/ You couldn't be teasing me/ when you're giving me what you've got." Someone stop me before I bludgeon my stereo into bits and pieces. (BM)

Orbital Records, PO Box 2296 Monroe, MI 48161

Severed Head Of State - Anathema Device, CD

These guys hate Jesus, and they scream about it for half an hour while playing mile-a-minute hardcore. Looks like they wear eyeliner, too. (AJ)

Hardcore Holocaust Records, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Sex Positions - S/T, CD

Drawing on a multitude of influences not usually associated and then mixing them into an oozing whole may not seem like a good idea. But tell that to Boston's Sex Positions, whose self-titled record breaks all the rules and does so with ardent conviction to deliver one of the best hardcore records in recent memory. I'm sure that many purists will turn their nose at the chaotic marriage of hardcore, electronica, punk, garage and new wave. But those with open minds are likely to discern genius from novelty and appreciate this record for what it is: uniquely good fuckin' fun. (BN)

Deathwish Records, 35 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970, www.deathwishinc.com



☞ Shadows And The Silence / Choke Their Rivers With Their Dead – split, 7"

These two bands must have met at the "our band name is way to wordy" convention or something. The Shadows' track "Where's Will Smith When You Need Him?", is a sprawling, moody You And I-esque number that manages to hit all of the right bases without sounding too generic. Both of the Choke tracks on the other hand are a lot less dynamic, with "A Tort Et A Travers" even committing the cardinal sin of having a spoken word intro. For shame! (MS)

Self-released, www.shadsandthesilence.com, www.chokeetherivers.com

Sharks And Minnows – The Cost Of Living, CD

This didn't really do a whole lot for me personally, though these fellows do seem talented at playing sensitive indie pop with your traditional guitar, bass, drums, vocals and some keyboards. I just didn't find that extra something that makes this kind of music click. (SJ)

Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107-0455, www.twoshedsmusic.com

☞ Shockwave – The Ultimate Doom, CD

This is the type of unoriginal bullshit that gives heavy metal a bad name. Shockwave is a gimmick band, nothing more. They intersperse their lame-ass nu metal riffs with samples from old *Transformers* cartoons. I guess it's supposed to be one long, campy "in" joke. The sad part is bands like this give ammo to all those hipsters who don't take metal seriously and dismiss big-riff rock as being dumb. When you've got crap like this floating around, it's pretty hard to argue the point. If you're over the age of 14 and purchase this record, shame on you. The same goes for that stupid album by The Darkness. (AJ)

Triple Crown Records, 331 57th St., PMB 472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Shoehouse – Concentrated Living, CD

Shoehouse definitely has some shoegazing moments. They do the quiet/loud indie rock thing pretty well. It reminds me of the type of record that would have come out on a major label during the big alternative-rock explosion. (DA)

Some Guy Down The Street Records, PO Box 420455 San Francisco, CA 94142, www.shoehouserock.com

☞ Single Frame – Wetheads Come Running, CD

This band is hard to pin down. This indie-rock trio (keys, gitter, drums) has a disgruntled path to follow, but borrows elements of keyboard-based, mellow rock/punk-lite to keep things upbeat as well as smooth and comforting. The mood changes regularly on this disk, but they aim to please. It really is quite hard to explain their sound in the space allotted, but influences of early Modest Mouse, Fugazi and Devo are evident. Single Frame is their own beast, though, one that becomes more enticing after each listen. (DM)

Volcom Entertainment, 1740 Monrovia Costa Mesa, CA 92627

Sinister Quarter – Pink Guillotine, CD

I'm having a hard time with this one. It doesn't move me—that's for sure. The songs are somewhat intricate, with lots of single notes. There's a band like this in every scene. (DA)

Exotic Fever Records, PO Box 297 College Park, MD 20741-0297, www.exoticfever.com

16 – Zoloft Smile, CD

The album title is taken from a psychotropic medicinal reaction to this punkish sludge-metal band whose lyrics read: "Career cancelled, I am not an animal" on "Balloon Knot." The record isn't that bad, but to be honest, my smile would be fake. (DI)

At A Loss Recordings, PO Box 582, Eastlake, CO 80614-0582, www.ataloss.com

☞ Skimmer – Still, CD

Skimmer is back! The UK's answer to Sicko, Skimmer came out at the peak of the '90s pop-punk boom and never abandoned their lovable sound as their friends outgrew one of punk's most vilified subgenres. This 15-track well-produced pop-punk CD might sound overly formulaic for those not into that scene, but Skimmer always stood out as being extra catchy. This album does not disappoint. In fact, it's an incredibly tight and fast release, clocking in at just over a half-hour. I'd almost venture to say that it's even a little more potent than their prior work, with some truly magical songs such as "Julie's A Heretic," "1978" and the album's lead-in track, "A Monkey For Christmas." (AE)

Crackle!, PO Box 7, Otley, LS21 1YB, UK, www.crackle.freeuk.com

Slats, The – Pick It Up, CD

An eclectic record running the gamut from pop, indie, punk and noise while maintaining a steady stream of melody and They Might Be Giants cleverness. A low and fuzzed-out guitar sound drives every song and balances well with the quirky, instrumental interplay and pop vocals. (MG)

Latest Flame Records, 1638A Astor St., Milwaukee, WI 53202, www.latestflame.com

☞ Sleep Station – After The War, CD

Sleep Station's *After The War* is an ambitious, yet uneven, World War II concept album. The record's strength lies in tracks like "Caroline, London 1940", "After The War" and "Silver In The Sun," which contain elements of Britpop's catchy melodies and hooks. Unfortunately, *After The War* is not immune to the typical filler that plagues concept albums. Tracks like, "Drums Of War" and "A Final Prayer 1" seem wildly out of place for anything but a late '80s Nintendo game. With some editing, this mellow 17-track album could be the fine record it wants to be. (RL)

Bardic Records/EyeBall Records, PO Box 8669, Red Bank, NJ 07701, www.eyeballrecords.com, www.bardicrecords.com

Slink Moss Explosion – S/T, CD

Rockabilly with more pop and than sleaze. Slink Moss' vocal delivery is a tad too clean, and his lyrical content sounds a bit forced. He tries too hard to write like a hep-cat from the '50s. But the band does play some cool throwback grooves, so it's worth a listen. (AJ)

Rattlesnake Records/Self-released, 114 East First St., #29, New York, NY 10009, www.slinkmoss.com

☞ Small Object A – Grand Autre, CD

An embarrassing amount of time went into personalizing this for review in *Punk Planet*. Well, it ain't gonna help (\$100 would). Luckily, the music is fantastic. The sax-led post-rock is loose in energy, but tight in performance. They keep it engaging to not let it fall into mindless drone, but still mesmerizing nonetheless. I hope they play live with go-go dancers. (VC)

Self-released, www.smallobjecta.cjb.net

☞ Smalltown – Years, Months, 7"

Deranged Records, mainly known for putting out fast-as-hell hardcore EPs, picked up one of Europe's best pop bands for this excellent 7". It's always encouraging to see a label display such range, and given that they've already released some Swedish hardcore and power-violence bands, it's apropos that they'd be the ones to jump at releasing these great Swedish pop songs. Smalltown is becoming a little more rock 'n' roll than when they began. Both tracks here have a big Ramones influence. The B-side is a cover of the UK punk classic "When The Oil Runs Out" by Newtown Neurotics. It might be the most rock 'n' roll interpretation of the Newton Neurotics to date, and if it's any indication of where Smalltown is headed, they seem to be more than up to the challenge. (AE)

Deranged Records, PO Box 543 Stn. P, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2T1, Canada, www.derangedrecords.com

So Automatic – Black Ink Rising, CD

We all know people who have a habit of stating the obvious. If it's 90 degrees outside you'll hear it first from them that it's hot. So Automatic hoarsely retreads the melodic-hardcore tire, adding nothing to the landscape and proving that there must be a premium on abstract thinking. (SM)

HBM Records/Self-released, 314 Park St., New Bedford, MA 02740, soautomatic@yahoo.com

Soliabeat Alliance – Island Fire, CD

This U.K. pop-ska outfit, formerly known as Spankboy, features a crisp, highly produced sound on its latest. The album is smothered in several anthemic, guitar-driven tunes with an occasional slower, rock-steady-influenced piece. The pop influence is reminiscent of Reel Big Fish and Save Ferris. (EG)

Moon Ska Europe, PO Box 20, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5NF, UK, www.moonskaeurope.com

Some Girls – All My Friends Are Going Death, CD

Totally boring hardcore that mixes members of The Locust, Give Up The Ghost and Unbroken. You'd be better off listening to any of those bands than wasting your time with what feels more like a shittily mixed drink than a delicious top-shelf cocktail. (DH)

Deathwish Records, 35 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970, www.deathwishinc.com

Some Other Place – To Be Continued, CD

Some kind of Eastern Bloc light electronic music with a clarinet thrown in. Maybe this is Swedish. I don't know—some country with a funny alphabet. (BC)

Self-released, no contact information provided

☞ Soophie Nun Squad – Pasizzle Slizzles Tha Drizzle, 12"

As of late pop and hip-hop, both musically and culturally, are becoming more and more intertwined. In both cases, the melding of these two genres could potentially produce some powerful and progressive outcomes. In the case of this particular record, the end result is somewhat disastrous. Instead of unifying their influences within songs, the Soophie Nun Squad bounces back and forth between genres in cut-and-paste manner. Reeking of suburban middle school-style rhymes, track one is a skill-less hip-hop attempt. Mediocre at best, track two is a sloppy pop-punk bit. This structural cycle continues onward through-

Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Laidman (DAL)

Smart Went Crazy, Now We're Even. "Think of poor John Wilkes Booth/ All those years of Shakespeare/ And what does everybody want to talk about?" ... "Sister, sister there's piss in your coffee/ Your overpriced gourmet coffee" ... "He is over you like the Enola Gay." All right, enough with the clever lyrics. What could be cloying if not matched musically becomes sublime when sung over some of the most sweetly paranoid compositions to emerge from '90s indie rock. Thank God for Dischord, not just for all the brilliant bands that started there in the early years, but for surviving into the turn of the century and giving refuge to oddball bands like Smart Went Crazy. This is an album that's not just soundtrack-for-your-life material, but a worthy, perfectly fitting and totally indelible soundtrack for some really important moment in your life. For me, it was, well, I'm not telling. But it was in college, and it was important. Every time I feel like taking a little trip back in time, I put this record on, and life is once again full of deviant promise as fallen child geniuses unleash their guitar and cello flamethrowers at all our enemies. These evil delicacies don't just lodge themselves in your memory banks, relegated to the past. A decade later you find new meanings and new melodies.

Recent picks: Maritime, Beauty Pill (reviewed this issue), Coulier, Girlboy Girl, Lovekill, Delafields, Rum Diary.

Soophie Nun Squad / Sultans

out the record, with skits, interludes and whiney keyboard tracks occasionally surfacing to fill empty space. On the positive note, the illustrative artwork on the album is solid, songs about exponents and human juxtaposition are amusing, and, judging by the liner-note photos, this crew of pseudo-MCs appears to be having lots of fun. When this record came to a stop, an odd smirk came across my face; my instincts were puzzled, divided between nausea and laughter. Variety is the spice of life, but sometimes it works in bad taste. (BM)

Harlan Records, 7205 Germonimo North, Little Rock, AR 72716

☛ **Soophie Nun Squad / Abe Froman – split, 12"**

Goddamn. The Soophie Nun Squad is like Atom, his package plus 10 of his nuttiest friends, crossed with that crazy-ass Reggie and his full effect. Yes, the band is actually 11 deep, which creates a hectic and noisy indie rock, hip hop and electronica sound that seems to come naturally. It's definitely unlike anything you've ever heard before and probably too crazy even to imagine. Despite its disjointed nature, the Soophie Nun Squad is absolutely fucking great. Abe Froman, on the other hand, features two guys and girl, each screaming and playing their instruments as hard as they can while maintaining a surprisingly strong grip on melody. Distorted, deranged and genius. (BN)

Harlan Records, 7205 Germonimo, Little Rock, AR 72716

Sounds Like Braille – Right Out Of Left Field, Straight To The Middle Of Nowhere, CD

The synesthetic title suggests an evocative, hypersensual onslaught, and they do manage to be evocative and dramatic with their textured guitar work. Fans of layered, instrumental indie rock will likely approve, but I wish they threw some more curveballs to live up to their unpredictable name. (DAL)

Contraphonic, PO Box 2203, Chicago, IL 60690, www.contraphonic.com

Sounds Like Violence – The Pistol, CDEP

These Swedes play rockin' indie rock, a sort of mish-mash of styles that doesn't quite fit any one by itself. The yelled vocals and guitar attack give them a Drive Like Jehu feel at times, but it's not an exact fit. Regardless, it's an intriguing debut. (KR)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte NC 28236 www.deepelm.com

Split Habit – Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is, CD

Split Habit is a lovable Chicago power-pop three-piece, with a very full retro sound that doesn't come off at all contrived. The ironic, campy lyrics and hip guitar bounce are genuine, despite their self-referential nature. Works for me. (AE)

Double Zero Records, PO Box 7122, Algonquin, IL 60102, www.doublezerorecords.com

Stakeout, The – On The Run, CD

This fast-paced, '80s-influenced hardcore with shouted vocals hails from Finland, but the lyrics are sung in English. Fun and catchy riffs played insanely fast that may cause finger-pointing or circle pits when played at parties. Also includes a cover of Suicidal Tendencies' "Memories Of Tomorrow." Good stuff. (KM)

Deranged Records, PO Box 543 STM.P, Toronto ON, M5S-2T1, Canada, www.derangedrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

LiLiput, Kleenex/LiLiput. For years I was under the impression that Wire's *Pink Flag* was the definitive art-punk album. Then a friend of mine introduced me to LiLiput's, *Kleenex/LiLiput*. To this day, I happily can not decide which band owns the better record. Tucked away in Switzerland, LiLiput showed total disinterest in anything but their music. Traditional song structures, tempos and hopes of global fame were chunked out the window throughout the band's entire '78 to '83 run. Cloaked in obscurity, both during and after their career, *Kleenex/LiLiput* is a thorough collection of the band's catalogue (and the only easily obtainable document of the band currently available). The collection captures the band's bare, minimalist, down-picking beginnings to their later incorporations of such typically unorthodox instruments as kazoos, saxophones and accordions. Even as the band's musicianship improved, they never lost sight of their unpretentious penchant for experimentation.

Currently in rotation: Elliott Smith, *Either/Or*; Eddie Cochran, *On The Air*; The Pretenders, *Learning to Crawl*; The Clash, *Sandinista*; Johnny Cash, *American IV: The Man Comes Around*.

Strap-Ons, The – Punk On Punk Crime, CD

C'mon, the band is fucking called "The Strap-Ons." You know they play in-your-face fist-fucking punk rock that makes you sick in a good way (BC)

Valiant Death Records, 22543 James River Drive, Carrollton, VA 23314

Summer Blanket – Charm Wrestling, CD

Nice, mellow indie-pop with inspired instrumentation, lush, harmonized vocals, strong songwriting and great production, all adding up to cohesive result. If any one of the aforementioned elements were lacking, the whole record would suffer. Track eight, "The Story Of Our Lives," is an irresistible pop gem. (JC)

Pop Up Records, PO Box 970748, Coconut Creek, FL 33097, www.popuprecords.com

Super 8 Cum Shot – Volume 2, CD

Punk-influenced rock 'n' roll like the Ramones, but with really goofy, homoerotic lyrics and pornography clips between each song. The music left a little to be desired. It wasn't bad, just kind of boring. However, if you're into homocore you might dig this. (KM)

Self-released, 70 West Burton Place, #601, Chicago, IL 60610, www.super8cumshot.com

Supine To Sit – Break Out Your Indicator, CD

This release is a lot more rock-based compared with some of Lovitt's older releases. It's got elements of early '90s indie rock and poppy, emo rock. Very melodic, but all the songs are a bit slow for my taste. Not bad, but not very exciting either. (KM)

Lovitt Records, PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210, www.lovitt.com

Spanish For 100 – Newborn Driving, CD

Indie rock that would have been played on every college radio station in the '90s. That's mostly because the music director said so, not because the DJ was excited for it. The sung-from-the-heart vocals are the high point. (EA)

Self-released, PO Box 17975, Seattle, WA 98107, www.spanishfor100.com

☛ **Spits, The – S/T, CD**

The Spits are assholes. Really, they release three self-titled albums, each with nine tracks. Luckily, they are all on different labels, so this time we have one from Dirtnap Records. Did you hear their song on the Dirtnap comp? The last track that is more a fun jab at other bands, including Dirtnap's darling, Roxy Epoxie. The Spits are fun punk, but not silly, just fun to sing along to their two-minute blasts. The addition of some very simple keyboards/sampler adds to their sound and avoids them falling into the Ramones trap. Notorious for some great live shows and theatrics, The Spits put on a show you won't want to miss. With each release, I feel they are becoming less obnoxious and more tight. This third one is their best yet; pick it up and see what the hype is about. (EA)

Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Standard, The – Wire Post To Wire, CD

I never thought I would find myself writing a *Punk Planet* review in which I refer to a band as an indie-rock version of Billy Joel, but I guess I just did. Soulful ballads with a helping of underground angst, funneled through an artsy Portland kaleidoscope. (DAL)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-4821, www.yeproc.com

Strap-Ons, The – Punk On Punk Crime, CD

C'mon, the band is fucking called "The Strap-Ons." You know they play in-your-face fist-fucking punk rock that makes you sick in a good way (BC)

Valiant Death Records, 22543 James River Drive, Carrollton, VA 23314

Street Dogs / Dents, The – Round One, split CD

A decent enough split featuring two tracks from each band. Street Dogs play that Boston-style tough-guy street punk while The Dents are more of a punk n' roll act with female vocals. Both bands do their thing well, but with four tracks, total shouldn't this be a 7-inch? (BN)

Abbey Lounge Records, 3 Beacon St. Somerville, MA 02143, www.abbeylounge.com

Struggle, The – Hopeless Nights, 7"

As far as dirt punk goes, this is quality stuff, especially from a young band. With old-school U.S. and UK punk influences, they'll have the kids screaming along, fingers in the air. If they stick it out, they'll be up there with Unseen or Total Chaos. (DM)

FNS, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.net

Stuntface – The Incredible, Unstoppable Titan Of Terror, CD

Straight-up punk rock without anything even remotely fancy. Listening to all of the songs in one sitting wore me out, but I did enjoy it in smaller doses. If you're unimpressed with intricate melodies and just want something to run around in a circle to, this record will do. (BN)

Good Clean Fun Records, 48 Cardigan Road, Haverfordwest, SA61 2QN, UK, www.goodcleefunrecords.co.uk

Subhumans – Live In A Dive, CD

This is the UK Subhumans, not the Canadian band, doing one of Fat Wreck's "Live In A Dive" releases. You get a comic book and a great-sounding live CD that is essential for fans. At 26 tracks, it isn't a bad place to start your introduction if you like live discs. (EA)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, www.fatwreck.com

☛ **Sultans – Shipwrecked, CD**

"Behold, the castrated treble attack of the Sultans!" read the liner notes. Leave it up to John Reis (Rocket From The Crypt) and company to find some new angle. Those of you familiar with this band's debut, *Ghost Ship*, will notice a shocking lack of distortion in the songs. They retain the same bounce (except for "Too Tough"), with a '70s powerpop feel that is reminiscent of old punk and garage. The onesheet says the band wanted to keep it weak, naked and malnourished to create the palette-cleansing music of the everyman. It works, especially in opener "It Meant Nothing," "Walk Of Shame" and "Paralyzed." You can't go wrong with the Sultans, and the lack of pretension is refreshing. Who else would play a high-school dance and county fairs besides these guys? *Shipwrecked* was recorded in an afternoon using borrowed instruments and tape from RFTC's *Scream*, *Dracula*, *Scream* sessions—"a new precedence of D.I.Y. thrifty-ness has been set," according to the liner notes. The band's tongue is firmly planted in cheek, and goddamn if the results aren't kickass. (KR)

Swami Records, PO Box 620428, San Diego, CA 92162, www.swamirecords.com



Superhopper – Does This Sound Exciting Yet?, CD

Superhopper look like four average 20-something Minnesota boys and sound like they've been possessed by the ghosts of alt-rock's past—that's totally a compliment, by the way. I haven't heard an indie band this precise and intelligent for a long time. I'm compelled to compare them to Gaza Strippers, perhaps a little less flamboyant and goofy, but still with the anthem rock hooks, straight-forward guitars and dominant frontman. The vocals are amazing – so bold, mature and always convincing, even when accusing Chevy Chase for the disappearance of fellow SNL comic Laraine Newman. Suggested listening: "Something Real Cool," "Twenty Seven," "I Am Hermit." (EG)

Guilt Ridden Pop, PO Box 11894, St. Paul, MN 55111, www.guiltriddenpop.com

Swarm Of The Lotus – When White Becomes Black, CD

The evil Siamese twin of Isis that was forced to live in the attic and eat fish heads, Swarm Of The Lotus likes it heavy. Only accept a ride from this band if you check the backseat for the tech metal that's waiting with piano wire in its hands. (DH)

At A Loss Recordings, PO Box 582, Eastlake, CO 80614-0582, www.atalosrecordings.com

Tallboys – Scallywag Tag, CDEP

Remember the great female punk bands? Slits, Kleenex, X-Ray Spex, Siouxsie, Bikini Kill, etc. Move over, girls, the Tallboys are coming to share record-shelf space with you. They are indeed a girl band (with a boy on bass), and it should be noted because we rarely find a girl group that plays such great sloppy, noisy, loud, crazy punk as these girls. I applaud the Tallboys for this five-song disc, and I am currently holding my breath for a full length from these New Yorkers. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs may get the press, but when the Tallboys opened a leg of their tour, many believed they stole the show. I can hear why, because this disc has spent numerous hours in my player. Fresh and original with a throwback to the great '70s punk girls, the Tallboys have stolen my heart. (EA)

JakAttak Records, PO Box 1530, Woodbridge, NJ 07095, www.jakattak.com

Talk, The – It's Like Magic In Reverse, CD

Energetic rock that's thoroughly enjoyable, full of sparkling riffs and distinctive vocals—a bit David Bowie, a bit Bob Mould. I've listened to this record three times straight through now, so they must be doing something right. (JG)

Morisen Records, 1409 E. Blvd., Suite 213, Charlotte, NC 28203, www.morisen.com

Target Nevada – Something Nasty, CDEP

Just two songs of really pissed off metalcore on this CD. The singer has insane, evil demon vocals that are slightly annoying; maybe it's an overdub or something. The music is pretty good chugga-chugga type stuff with interesting melodies every now and again, but mostly this sounds pretty familiar. (KM)

Surprise Attack Records, 2601 Peach St., Erie, PA 16508, www.surpriseattackrecords.com

Taylor, Teresa – The Cryingness Of Your Crying When You Cry, CDEP

Theresa Taylor's music is the kind of nice, slow, acoustic stuff that makes for good background music. With a college sound, the songs

range from mildly thrashing ("Candy") to downright slovenly. She's got a lovely voice (deep, subtly dark and even) but something seems lacking—like she really wants to go nuts but keeps herself back. (SP)

Self-released, 4165, 17th Street, San Francisco, CA 94114, www.teresataylor.com

Temper Temper / Call Me Lightning – split, 7"

Temper Temper provides a delicate, wiry indie-laced track with pop melodics and a bit of noise distortion. I love the emphasis on the sad, soaring vocal—reminds me of the Walkmen. C.M.L. offers a quirky indie-punk tune that's reminiscent of early Piebald without the heavy mechanics. Two bands that you should definitely check out. (MG)

Forge Again Records, PO Box 146837, Chicago, IL 60614, www.forgeagainrecords.com

1090 Club / Forecast, The – split, CD

1090 rock the mellow, moody indie rock that can get crunchy but remain mellow. The Forecast is the catchier and more upbeat with male/female vocals. They are a bit more dynamic in their emo, punk, almost pop dwellings. I got a yearning for more Forecast now. (DM)

Thinker Thought Records, 1002 Devonshire Rd. Washington, IL 61571, www.thinkthoughtwrong.com

Thrift Store Heroes – Moving On, CD

The Thrift Store Heroes play "radio friendly" power pop. A lot of the lyrics on the radio make me cringe, and so did a few on this album. Unless you are packing a lot of heat (i.e., Elastica), copping riffs off of seminal bands (i.e., The Who) is not advised. (RL)

Self-released, www.thriftstoreheroes.com

Thunder Pistols – S/T, CD

Although the Heartbreakers/Sex Pistols rock 'n' roll style done by the Thunder Pistols is simple and old, they do it well. There are no surprises on this album, but the singing, playing and songwriting are all solid. (JJG)

Pelado Records, 521 West Wilson #C103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627 www.peladorecords.com

Tiara – The Summer Of The Lion, The Summer Of The Lamb, CD

Indie pop that dips into repetition and may induce yawning if not taken with care. Tiara's knack for melody and mood is overshadowed by its droning tempo and lack of energy. Not my taste, but could be yours. (AA)

We Want Action, 1510 Runaway Bay Dr., #28, Columbus, OH 43204, www.wewantaction.com

Tight Phantomz – Nightfool, CDEP

Ex-members of Lustre King put together a five-song EP that wreaks of late '70s arena-rock nostalgia and cheap, retro-garage riffage. It sounds a bit like the first Panthers LP, which I found equally as uninspired. And what the hell is up with the spelling of "phantomz"? Isn't gangsta spelling passé already? (MS)

Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago IL 60657, www.southernrecords.com

Torch Marauder, The – Boxers, Painters And Snappers, CD

Superhopper / Tracy + the Plastics

This is essentially a vanity project, and it sounds like it. The Torch Marauder is Dave Bjorkback, drummer of Razzle. He's assembled some musicians to play his songs, and the results range from annoying indie-rock foppiness to outright kicking out of jams. This has one of the best songs I've heard all year and several of the worst. (RR)

Pox World Empire, 1512 James St., Durham, NC 27707, www.poxworldempire.com

Tortoise – It's All Around You, CD

Well, it's another Tortoise album. The indifference I felt upon completion of this album was more of a let down than the album itself. Things started out all right, with the first track sounding just like what you'd expect from Tortoise by now: a smattering of piano, sparse guitar and various auxiliary percussion spread out over a few minutes of jazzy drum programming. The second song lets things fall into the slightly more avant-garde category with some cheesy vocal synth (or a poorly used and manipulated sample) and more of the drum machine. By the third song, I was really itching for some live drums, and was let down when the machine kicked in once again. It wasn't until halfway through the record that a real human drummer turned up, but the overly thin (but still jazz-influenced) songs remained even amongst his presence. The latter half of *It's All Around You* is just as underwhelming as the first and ends with "Salt The Skies," a driving tune that simply gives up and stops. The ability to create a dense, musical tapestry isn't totally absent from Tortoise, but the quality of thread used is obviously less. (DH)

Thrill Jockey, PO Box 08038, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Torture Killer – For Maggots To Devour, CD

Cool throwback death metal with an early '90s Tampa sound. This is an exceedingly solid release for those times when all you want is straight-up death metal. These Finnish men know what heavy music fans want and deliver.

Candlelight USA, 707 Plymouth, Meeting, PA 19462, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Towers Of Hanoi – S/T, CDEP

If post-hardcore is a genre, then this is it. Thick and slowed down hardcore stylistics form the basis for this complicated rock, both mathy and emotive. The almost gothic vocals add an eerie feeling—reminds me of Ashes, but with less emphasis on the guitar chug. (MG)

Barracuda Sound, PO Box 11994, Gainesville, FL 32604, www.barracudasound.com

Toys That Kill – Flies, CDEP

By now everybody knows this is former members of FYP, right? Very well. This EP has four melodic, hook-filled punk songs with guitars that go buzz and super-catchy vocal melodies. They cover a Wire song, and it's not "Ex-Lion Tamer!" I couldn't stop listening to this. (JC)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Tracy + The Plastics – Culture For Pigeon, CD/DVD

Powerful electro-punk fueled for dance and inspiration. Although Tracy + The Plastics is technically the work of one woman, both live and

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

Tool, Enima. I loved Tool from the first time I heard their *Undertow* album at the tender age of 14. A lot of bands have come and gone for me in that time, but I've remained a fan of Tool. Their releases keep on getting better and better. The three or four years you have to wait in between the releases are definitely worth the wait. Anyway, *Enima* is the band's second full-length and undoubtedly their best, showcasing the band at its most creative. This is where their blending of prog-rock, metal, heavy rock, amazing vocals and general weirdness come together to create an amazing release. The poignant and hypnotic guitar lines, some of the most talented and creative bass lines and drumming you've ever heard meet with powerful vocals, and the results would move anybody. The whole album feels epic, and often the songs flow together like a concept album. Songs go from whispering and quiet guitar picking to full-on walls of guitars and insanely good drumming. With most tracks clocking in around or above six minutes, there is a lot of instrumentation going on, and yet it stays fresh and interesting even after repeated listens. Fans of intelligent metal and awesome bands should check this album out if you have not already.

Playlist: I Would Set Myself on Fire for You, CD and live; Forstellia Ford, *Well Versed In Deception*; Breeders, *Pod*, BET videos; Unwound, *The Future Of What*.

on the included DVD, Wynne Greenwood incorporates three alter egos via video, in turn redefining the boundaries of solo performance and identity concept. Threatening, beautiful and highly charged. (BM)
Troubleman Unlimited, 16 Willow St., Bayonne, NJ 07002, www.troublemanunlimited.com

Transistor Transistor / Wolves – split, CD

I guess you could call this screamo, but that word is a bit loaded, and this is actually *good*. Both bands play a fast, churning style of hard-core/punk with yelped and screamed vocals, but manage to avoid the traps into which so many screamo bands usually fall. (RR)
Level Plane Records, PO Box 7926, Charlottesville, VA 22906, www.level-plane.com

Tremendous Fucking – How's My Fucking?, CDEP

This CD rocks! As you can probably guess by the title, this music has some serious attitude. It's punk rock with occasional doses of experimental music. The singer sounds like someone who would jump off a 10-foot stage knowing that nobody was gonna catch him. Now that's punk rock! (SJ)

Higher Step Records, PO Box 5403, Evansville, IN 47715, www.higherstep.com

Trophy Scars – Hospital Music For The Aesthetics Of Language, CD

Well preformed, but bland, overdramatic hardcore. Moments of creative redemption do appear, often due to the oil-slicked recording. The potential is there; Trophy Scars will need to dry their eyes in order to actualize it. Quiet and loud, the cycle continues—you know the routine. (BM)
Self-released, www.trophyscars.com

Tulsa Drone – No Wake, CD

Very cool instrumental-rock compositions propelled by the dulcimer of Peter Neff. Dark, melodic, highly original sound with an eerie vibe. Well-written enough to keep most people's attention, even without vocals. (AJ)
Dry County Records, PO Box 14592, Richmond, VA 23221, www.drycounty.net

Twisted Roots – BAT194, CD

Twisted Roots is an obscure early '80s LA post-punk group that feature Pat Smear on guitar (Germs), Kira Roessler on bass (Black Flag), Paul Roessler on keyboards (The Screemers), Maggie Ehrig on vocals and Emil Mckown on drums. In case the lineup doesn't give it away, this band was phenomenal. The only holdup: They were together for only six months. However, it was a fruitful six months, as this brilliant compilation can attest. The band contained elements of both post-punk and funk (similar to Gang Of Four). The two most striking features of Twisted Roots are Ehrig's vocals and

Kira's bass playing. Ehrig sounds shockingly like a female version of The Fall's Mark E. Smith, while Kira's playing is worth the purchase of this album alone. Had this band stayed together, it could have been a contender. Included are liner notes, written by Paul Roessler, which recount the band's all-too-brief history and the demise of LA's first wave of punk. Highly recommended! (RL)
Dionysus Records, PO Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507, www.dionysusrecords.com

Tyko – A Long Way From One To Zero, CD

You appreciate Tyko for its slow and steady start to this its third full-length. It's better to give the muscles a light flex before the heavy contracting. Then again, the heaviest contracting these four Razorbacks do is cerebral. If any of them were to break a sweat while playing his instrument, it would assuredly be a case of poor ventilation, not exertion. But the plying of male and female vocals gives these shoegazers a shine that could be taken for real indie-pop perspiration. (SM)

Blisscent Records, 11 S. Angell St. #486, Providence, RI 02906, www.blisscentrecords.com

Tyrone – Numinous, CD

The best description of this band I can come up with sounds like something you'd attempt on a dare: fully engaging, practically catchy, near-instrumental jazzy post-rock/punk. I wouldn't believe it either if I hadn't heard it for myself. (RR)

Noise Pollution, PO Box 72189, Louisville, KY 40272, www.louisvillenoise.com

Umbrella Sequence, The – The Disappearing Line / Athena, CDEP

An EP of melodic, electronic-based rock (synths, keyboards, guitars, bass) in the style of *Kid A*, but leaning more toward slow-core. They play good, atmospheric rock that could be more dynamic in breaking through the superficial orchestration, but it's enjoyable nevertheless. (AJA)

Ohew Records, PO Box 772121, Coral Springs, FL 33077, www.ohewrecords.com

Under A Dying Sun – Supernova, CD

Under A Dying Sun play rocking, noisy, melodic hardcore with a nice amount of power in the songs. Normally that'd go a long way for me, but this album is mostly forgettable. There are good musical moments, but the lengthy songs and screamed vocals grow old quickly. (KR)

Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Unjust – Glow, CD

Dear lord, this is when nü metal goes emo and totally commercial. Overly emotive vocals warble tales of woe over unimaginative metallic riffs. Either I've heard this on the radio, or it sounds just like one of those Staind-type bands. (KM)

Koolarrow Records, PO Box 5118 Richmond, CA 94805, www.koolarrowrecords.com

Unscum – S/T, CDEP

Great crust from Belgium, I believe. They deploy much of the old-school super-fast drumming with some serious tempo changes. In "Crust Punk Fraulein" we find "She so gnarly and she has many dreadlocks/ even pits and legs are hairy und tangled/ crust punk Fraulein/ ist my dream frau." (SJ)

Self-released, sacredplague@yahoo.com

Unseen, The – Explode, CD

These Boston boys may be the area's hardest working band. They start with your basic crust formula, but make it sharp and crisp with youth-crew-style shout-a-longs. They want to destroy the state while raising their finger and fist. You'll be hooked on the first listen by their passion and aggression. (DM)

BYO Records, PO Box 67609, Los Angeles, CA 90067, www.byorecords.com

Up In Arms – Good Morning Pasadena, CDEP

There are only two things from Pasadena, neither of which is much to brag about: KROQ radio and "The Little Old Lady From Pasadena." Since Jan Berry just died this week, I'll let him RIP. But really this KROQ-friendly, Sunny Day Real Estate name-checking emo band doesn't leave much to be desired. (DI)

Self-released, www.upinarmsmusic.com

Uphill Battle – Wreck Of Nerves, CD

The elements of grind, death metal and hardcore that were roughly recorded on Uphill Battle's self-titled release are honed to a sharp point on this sophomore effort. Even with two new members, their ferocious approach and triple-vocal assault will leave your head spinning. The New Wave of American Metal continues!

Relapse Records, PO Box 2060, Upper Darby, PA 19082, www.relapse.com

Vast Aire – Look Mom...No Hands, CD

Avant-garde hip-hop. Cerebral beats and poetic, freestyle-type lyrics. While it's refreshing to hear an artist in this genre who's not just

Reviewer Spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

The Flaming Lips, Transmissions From The Satellite Heart. A lot happens in a decade, I'm willing to concede. Even with all the normal goings-on, Wayne Coyne somehow had enough drugs and free time to write and record five of the most ambitiously charismatic albums to greet a Tuesday. It started with this 1993 record, the one with the song about jelly and tangerines. It was an unlikely breakout song, completely farcical, but completely formed. It was a song that gave Coyne the understanding that he could make ridiculous songs, utilizing the very back corners of the mind where the truly crazy meat-and-potato ideas bunk, so long as he puts them in pretty dresses, they act cordially in public places, and they sound pretty when they speak. It wasn't selling out in the slightest, but from the point of "She Don't Use Jelly" on, the Lips have fine-tuned the art of straddling the line between the mainstream, where everything has order and comes with a nice paycheck, and artistic obscurity, where frivolity often out-mans substance and the rent is due faster every month. Maybe a song like this couldn't happen again. Maybe it would need to be remixed with a Jay-Z record to get noticed, or maybe we don't go for the silly shit anymore. However it is, "Chewin' The Apple Of Your Eye" and "Superhumans" were the blueprints for all that "Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots" and "The Soft Bulletin" covers.

Current occupations: Pedro The Lion, *It's Hard To Find A Friend*; The Thermals, *Fuckin' A*; The Extra Glens, *Martial Arts Weekend*; The Killers, *Mr. Brightside* EP; Ben Kweller, *On My Way*.

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.)Dana Morse (DM)

Boxer, The Hurt Process. These boys from Boston (that's a recurring theme for me this issue) had a short-lived career. Their label seemed to ensure that through their ads; I saw the quote of Boxer being the "new kings of emo" or something along those lines. It was a huge joke to everyone. Sure I guess the content for this record is emo because it's about girls, but nobody called the Descendents emo. These guys were a lot more aggressive than any band that was holding the emo title around the time of this release in 1998. Hell, these guys were Boston's answer to Lifetime, straight up. They shared a lot of the same elements in style and content, but they were completely separate bands. *The Hurt Process* was loosely based on not having girls, getting girls and losing girls, in that order. For being a punk rock concept record, this completely rocked my socks from the first track whenever I pull this gem out. This is easily one of my favorite top 20 records. This record being Boxer's only release that I'm aware of, it will most likely make you sad because, after you hear it, you will wish there was another one to follow it up.

What rocks my socks?: V/A, *The Pill*; Twilight Singers, *Play Blackberry Belle*; Placebo, *Sleeping With Ghosts*; the Matt Skiba half or the Kevin Seconds split; *Chappelle's Show*; and *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*.



another pop-rap zombie, Vast Aire isn't quite as good as he thinks he is. But you could probably say the same of most rappers. (AJ)
Chocolate Industries, 1573 N. Milwaukee Ave., #442, Chicago, IL 60622,
www.chocolateindustries.com

Vibration, The – Ear To The Ground, CDEP

A combination of bravado and heavy drumming, spanking guitars and tough-ass female vocals. It'd be easy to compare this to bands like The Gossip, but there's more here than screamy rage/ecstasy—like a dripping soul. The best song is "Begin Again," and the hidden track surprises with slow melancholia. (SP)

BC Records, 45 Lincoln Avenue, Tuckahoe, NY 10707, www.bccrecs.com

Viimeinen Kolonna – Irvikuva, CD

Finnish thrash/hardcore to the extreme. I can't read a word, and even if I knew Finnish, I don't know how much I could understand. Each track is like a quick jab à la Drop Dead or countless others. If you release this in the USA, then I suggest a translation. (EA)

Hardcore Holocaust, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Vincebus Eruptum – S/T, CDEP

What the fuck was going through these guys' heads when they put this silly shit on to any type of medium? There are parts that are somewhat listenable, but most of it is ridiculous overly repetitive distorted vocals with nonsensical lyrics about farting and "being the shit." I would usually find this subject matter entertaining, but they will play the same goddamn wanky start/stop riff over and over for what feels like 10 minutes, then finish the song off with the singer growling over blast beats. I could tolerate this more if it wasn't all eight songs on this record! I don't know guys; I tried to like it, but just ended up annoyed. Maybe that was the point. (TK)
Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

Vindictives, The – Unplugged, CD

I've always been a big fan of these guys, but I'm not quite sure what to make of this collection of unplugged (!?) favorites. I've heard recently that the band had fallen upon some hard times, but these almost laughably earnest recordings of Vindictive standards is quite possibly one of the most bizarre-sounding albums I've heard in years. Hearing Joey Vindictive sing "I suck 'cause I've got rocks in my head" to the sounds of breezy acoustic guitar and light orchestration plays out much too much like a fractured lullaby for

my tastes. I always thought what made the Vindictives great was their frantic, schizophrenic nature, not to mention Joey's annoyingly endearing screech. Stripped down to their bare bones, I've come to the conclusion that the Vindictives sound downright frightening. After multiple listens, I'm still not even sure if this is a joke or not. (MS)

Teat Productions, PO Box 66470, Chicago IL 60666 www.teatproductions.com

Walls Of Jericho – All Hail The Dead, CD

After breaking up for a few years, metalcore's much beloved Walls Of Jericho have returned. Their sound is still as crushing and as brutal as ever, with speed-metal riffs and double-bass drums pounding. It's still better than the other bands rocking this sound, and their fans won't be disappointed. (KM)

Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

Wannadies, The – Before And After, CD

Quirky, fun pop-rock from a long-running band that keeps putting out the jams even after the big boys at RCA screwed up their chance at the big time. One of Sweden's best musical exports. (BC)

Hidden Agenda/Parasol 303 W. Griggs St. Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Waawe – All Fabulous Things Turn Out To Happen, CD

This Czech band has members that dabble in electronic music, post-hardcore and instrumental post-rock. Having said all that, they take elements of all these styles and combine them for this end product, Waawe. This is a very smart record that runs through the indie/prog rock department at the independent music store. At times this is very spacey, sometimes emo and both elements of being kind of sleepy as well as being quite uplifting. Pulling influences from the emo scene of the mid '90s as well as psychedelic and new wave from yesteryear, this just creates an all encompassing record that may be overlooked because it comes from the Czech Republic. I believe the Notwist had to go over similar hurdles, but they are getting much recognition in the states for their efforts. Hopefully Waawe is next in line. Fantastic from beginning to end. (DM)

Free Dimension Records, PO Box 35, 390 01 Tabor Czech Republic, www.freedimension.cz

Walkmen, The – Bows And Arrows, CD

The Walkmen's second album catches them building on the last record, but still straddling the fence between faster, harder, kinet-

ic pop and low-key musician's tinkering. They seem to be more successful with the first scenario; songs like the "The Rat" and "My Old Man" are the most memorable due to driving guitars and the raspy, yet engaging, voice of Hamilton Leithauser that, though distinct, can drone on the quieter tracks. However, he shows more range on *Bows And Arrows* than the previous album. The later songs, such as "Thinking Of A Dream I Had" and "New Year's Eve," are a stronger compromise between the Walkmen's conflicting styles, showing them experimenting with different beats. The semi-epic "Bows And Arrows" has a wide mix of instruments that all equally come and go, creating a slowly building, dynamic sound. With their fusion of propulsive rock and composed artiness, they show they're progressing toward something even more spectacular. (AJA)

Record Collection, 1223 Wilshire Blvd., #811, Santa Monica, CA 90403,
www.recordcollectionmusic.com

Wannadies, The – Before And After, CD

Quirky, fun pop-rock from a long-running band that keeps putting out the jams even after the big boys at RCA screwed up their chance at the big time. One of Sweden's best musical exports. (BC)

Hidden Agenda/Parasol 303 W. Griggs St. Urbana, IL 61801, www.parasol.com

Washdown, The – Yes To Everything, CD

Apparently Lookout needed another hipster rock band to pick up where The Pattern left off. I don't mean that to sound bad 'cause I loved The Pattern. This is along the same lines, but with a post-punk danceability in place of the southern-rock boogie. Probably lotsa fun live. (JC)

Lookout Records, 3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703, www.lookoutrecords.com

Wednesday Night Heroes, The – Superiority Complex, CD

These Canadian boys play melodic punk rock with a rough edge that is refreshingly good. This CD is loaded with singalongs, poppy hooks, catchy guitar and bass lines, and, to top it all off, they've got heart. I'll bet they're a blast to see live. (KM)

Longshot Music, PMB #72, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.longshotmusic.com

Weight, The – Ships / Stay Out, 7"

Traditional-sounding country that is not badly done but is too mellow for me. (JJG)

Sabot Productions PO Box 28, Gainesville, FL 32602, woodenshoe00@yahoo.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss

Schlong, Fish Booty. The best bands are those who can't be confined to the crippling limits of genre classification. Thanks to Schlong, most of today's hyped up or self-proclaimed "technical" punk or hardcore bands leave me unimpressed. Witnessing the East Bay trio play live was a mind-boggling experience. In a turbo-charged whirlwind of drunken antics and explosive musicianship, they tore through their sets, ferociously demolishing guidelines and livers a long the way. Schlong shows were unpredictable, chaotic, unparalleled and unforgettable. To this day, Dave Mello is the only drummer I've seen play while standing on a stool, one footed. Capturing this type of live energy on record is a challenge that most bands fail to meet; Schlong consistently succeeded, with flying colors. An epic and hilarious testimony to musical mayhem, *Fish Booty* features some of the band's greatest late-era creations. While the album retains all the finer qualities of good ol' fashioned dirty punk, the blind-sided transitions and abstract song structuring make for a work that defies standard definition. Schlong's magic was always worked with a grain of salt; their talent was jaw dropping, yet blissfully corrosive. Although I cherish the band's entire catalog, the oddball country tendencies and side-splitting one-liners that appear on *Fish Booty* make it my personal favorite. In a community in which anyone is invited to play music, regardless of ability, Schlong proved to be a diamond in the rough. The term "genius" shouldn't be thrown around lightly, but in this case it fits perfectly.

Other stranded on a desert island picks: Unwound, *Repetition*; Superchunk, *Here's Where The Strings Come In*; Silver Jews, *Bright Flight*; Aceyalone, *All Balls Don't Bounce*; Archers Of Loaf, *Vs. Greatest Of All Time*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Lifetime, Jersey's Best Dancers. It seems that every few years a new band comes along and completely rejuvenates the scene then breaks just before its peak. Such is the tragic story of Lifetime, a band that transformed the hardcore scene and then called it quits to the lament of fans worldwide. Their formula was simple: hard, fast and aggressive punk rock touched up with a healthy dose of melody. And it was brilliant. Dan Yemin's powerful guitar riffs were perfectly accented by the more measured guitar contribution of Pete Martin. Despite the coarse guitars and discordant drumming, Ari Katz's vocals carried loud and clear above the noise, expressing a multitude of feelings not usually associated with hardcore music. The lyrics also went away from the usual with their deeply personal and emotional tinges, creating a raw and searing combination of uncompromising hardcore punk and smart, introspective writing. That is perhaps the reason why so many of today's most popular artists name Lifetime as one of their strongest influences. The band's body of work is limited, yet its reach seemingly unconstrained. Now, years after Lifetime's demise and the subsequent break-up of the immediate offspring, the songs are as powerful and mean as they were when they were first recorded.

Punk-rock fiction required reading: Don De Grazia, *American Skirt*; Charles Romalotti, *Salad Days*; Ben Foster, *Like Hell*; *The Best Of 2.13.61 Publications*.

Whirlaway / Your Enemies Friends

Whirlaway - Pompano, CD

A competent shoegaze album. *Pompano* certainly doesn't break new ground, nor does it compare to its predecessors. It left me feeling a bit like Gil Scott-Heron's synopsis on Gerald Ford's career: tepid. (RL)

Self-released, www.whirlawaymusic.com

Wildhearts, The - Riff After Riff, CD

Heavy, crunchy riff rock 'n' roll alternating with poppy choruses. At times the songs almost sound too sweet, but usually the hard rock would come in and counter the sappiness. If this band could subtract the pop from their equation, I would like it a lot more. (JJG)

Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

Within Y - Extended Mental Dimensions, CD

Swedish thrash with that Gothenburg sound that The Haunted popularized. The songs here suffer from their own length, and the riffs seem recycled. This style is hard to make interesting, but these guys give it a good try. Not terrible, but only slightly above mediocre. Beautiful artwork. (DH)

Candlelight USA, 707 Plymouth, Meeting, PA 19462, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Witness This - Money To Burn, CD

Witness This play kickass, in-your-face, apolitical street punk with dopey song titles like "Fugly," "Y2K Is Gay" and "Big And Brown." Armed with more of a sense of humor than most such bands and above-average songwriting skills, this gang of beer-guzzlers will get you hopping whether or not you think you're too good for this sort of thing. When the singer yelled out "ska part" in one of the tracks, I laughed so hard I spit all over my computer monitor. Honestly way above average. I wonder what their following is like. Recorded back in 1998 and 2000, it's unclear if this is just coming out or if this is some sort of retrospective of a band we all missed out on. I hope it's not the latter because I want to see this fun-filled act live some day. (AE)

Self-released, 946 Hungerford Ave., Negaunee, MI 49866

World Burns To Death - No Dawn Comes...Night Without End, 7"

Here we have some crustcore with a couple of metal guitar solos. The lyrics are about the Holocaust, and there's a foldout containing a story of some of the abominations that took place during WWII. Heavy subject matter, but good stuff. (SJ)

Hardcore Holocaust Records, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

World Burns To Death - The Sucking Of The Missile Cock, CD

Politico punk rock that borders on power violence but sounds really hXc tough. This is a pretty brutal collection with strong beliefs to back it up. This CD also includes their *Human Meat* release. This is tops in this genre of punk. (DM)

Hardcore Holocaust, PO Box 26742, Richmond, VA 23261, www.hardcoreholocaust.com

Worm Is Green - Automagic, CD

Electronica's potential to create a parallel universe with synthetic sounds is what makes it so innovative, but it's the artist's incorporation of a familiar reality that gives it its brilliance and soul. Worm Is Green's subtle layers of organic sounds—string instruments, samples of stones rubbing together, and (female vocalist) Gudridur Ringsted's ghostly soprano—slide above and below complex matrices of dark melodies and shuttering, synth stubs. The result is an album of mesmerizing and innovative soundscapes. Not to mention the Icelandic band's staggering cover of Joy Division's "Love Will Tear Us Apart" that features Ringsted's vocals and an ethereal aesthetic that brings a new tone to the song. If there's one outfit that could pull it off, it's these compelling musicians. (CC)

Arena Rock Recording Company, 17 SE Third Ave., #405, Portland, OR 97214, www.arenarockrecordingco.com

Wright, Shannon - Over The Sun, CD

The quiet tones of Wright's first two records have been exchanged for deep piano melodies, frenetic guitar lines, the pop and hammer of drums and unleashed vocal power. *Over The Sun* (and producer Steve Albini) captures a turning point for Shannon Wright. By far, her best record to date. (CC)

Touch & Go/Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25525, Chicago, IL 60613

Xiu Xiu - Fabulous Muscles, CD

A pop mess infiltrated with synthesizers, guitars and fuzzy vocals presiding over wandering melodies. The vocals, sung by a wavering Jaime Stewart, threaten to collapse under excessive vibrato. But it's the lyrics that often aggravate: "I can't wait to tell you I punched your mommy in the chest." (SP)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507, www.src.com

Yes Sen Sei - We Who Transplant Sustain, CD

This very aggressive post-punk from Long Island reminded me a lot of The Jesus Lizard. The songs drag a bit with all the changes, but it's energetic and compelling overall. Excellent song titles include "Right Shirt, Wrong Band" and "Dissed In The Malibu." (AE)

Rock Lok, PO Box 137, Rocky Point, NY 11778, rokllok.ex-punk.com

.You. - I Am You, CD

It's always so hard to review ambient electro stuff, because records like *You's I Am You* are ultimately so pleasant and nonoffensive they barely leave an impression at all. The 16 tracks on *I Am You* flow flawlessly together, forming a pleasing wave of blips, blops and ambient noise. Written, performed and recorded on eight-track by Christopher Coello using a variety of digital devices (supplemented by analog instrumentation), *I Am You* floats along nicely in a hazy wash. (JG)

Stickfigure Records, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308, www.stickfiguredistro.com

Youngs, Richard - River Through Howling Sky, CDEP

It's quite impossible to believe that Richard Young's river makes much progress through that howling sky that namesakes this four-song EP. His is a minimalist, psychedelic creature that takes the mimic of a guitar string breaking, amplifies it and shakes it, and calls it a new language. (SM)

Jagjaguwar, 1021 South Walnut, Bloomington, IN 47401, www.jagjaguwar.com

Your Enemies Friends - You Are Being Videotaped, CD

After a tumultuous year following the release of their debut EP, Your Enemies Friends has finally released their long-player, and the pent-up energy from the delays and drama comes screaming out the speakers as the record kicks off with "The One Condition." This is heavy on the rock with punk's energy, synth accompaniment and frenetic vocals—comparisons to the Murder City Devils are inevitable, I suppose. Your Enemies Friends have a less gothic vibe, and the vocals aren't constantly yelled like MCD's were; see "Back Of A Taxi" for more info. The occasional female vocals add a nice element of distinction, such as in "Business French Kiss." Just about every track on here is intense, ominous and noisy, but there are plenty of hooks, too, as in "Pollution Of Noise." The first seven tracks are unrelenting, but the eighth, "Census," is a subdued affair that has a steady house-type beat with a few other elements of electronica. The album itself ends on a relatively mellow note with "Easy Assault," which puts strings into the mix. I could see this

Reviewer Spotlight: Sonia Pereira (SP)

Death By Chocolate, S/T. This is strictly music for a certain sort of person. Perhaps even for a certain mood. I have found, for instance, that if I listen to this when I'm feeling kind of serious, I hate it and think it's the dumbest thing in the world and why on earth haven't I sold it already? But if I find that I play it when the sun is shining, and I'd rather be a cartoon than a real woman, well, then I think it's the bees' sweet knees. For only a cartoon person could fully enjoy the silliness of quintessentially English '60s mod songs (pure gimmick, let me tell you) interspersed with a female speaking of all the chocolates in the universe. The songs go something like this: "I Is For Iberia" and so on through the alphabet, repeating the same tune and words until you want to eat enough sugar to whiz to Mars. It's all done in a cutesy nursery-rhyme way that borders on stoned glory, only this time it's Cadbury Cream Egg glory. Aside from all of the silliness and random school-lesson talk, there's also a sweet version of Cat Stevens' wondrous "If You Want To Sing Out." The DBC version recalls only the fondest *Harold And Maude* memories, even though the vocals are wavy and not too good. Listen while eating boxes of imported Cadbury Fingers. (SP)

Check these out: Rosemary Clooney / Bing Crosby, *Fancy Meeting You Here*; Madreus, *Antologia*; The Collected France Gall; Louis Prima, *The Wildest*; Patti Page, *16 Most Requested Songs*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

Can, Tago Mago. Say what you will about the music of the late '60s and early '70s—a.k.a. "hippie shit"—and you'll be right about a lot of it, but avant-garde and experimental music of that time was some of the most groundbreaking and transcendent in modern music. While Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew* and Mahavishnu Orchestra's *Birds Of Fire* came from throwing some rock into jazz, Can created some of the best music of the period with the opposite approach. Along with bands like Neu, Kraftwerk and Faust, Can was lumped into what came to be known as Kraut Roc, though they easily had as much in common with America's Silver Apples or Captain Beefheart. *Tago Mago* was one of four studio albums the band released with Damo Suzuki on vocals. Suzuki's yelping, strangled vocals are the perfect complement to the band's swirling, undulating music. The band builds from mellow, quiet passages into thunderstorm intensity. Many of punk's first visionaries took note as Pere Ubu, The Fall and John Lydon have all repped Can's inspiration in song or story since. (RR)

I'm writing this on the verge of the playoffs, so...the five NHL players likely to retire after this season and make me cry: 1. Steve Yzerman (Please, Stevie, one more year!) 2. Brett Hull (only Gordie and Gretz have scored more goals) 3. Chris Chelios (the greatest all-around American defenseman in history) 4. Mark Messier (second leading scorer ever—damn) 5. Igor Larionov (so long, Professor).



record being a bit repetitive upon subsequent listens, but the overall quality outshines such things. *You Are Being Videotaped* is worth the wait. (KR)

Buddyhead, PO Box 1268, Hollywood, CA 90078, www.buddyhead.com

Zim-Zims, The – S/T, CD

Romantic pop/rock with some satisfactory songwriting. Not heavy on grit, but a few of the better tunes (“Lover,” “Judy MC”) are reminiscent of The Beatles. Nothing to write home about, but not embarrassingly bad, either. (AJ)

Mann-Made Records/self-released, PO Box 72953, Davis, CA 95617, www.zimzims.com

V/A – Bony Orbit Records: Where The Rockets Explode Volume One, CD

Recommended compilation, mainly of dynamite regional Florida bands like The Obscene, H.C.A. and Libyan Hitsquad that ought to be better known outside of Florida. It’s a relatively diverse comp, with most of the bands favoring ‘80s influences such as hardcore, euro-pop and skate rock. (AE)

Bony Orbit Records, 719 Forrest Ave., #5, Cocoa, FL 32922, www.geocities.com/bonyorbit

V/A – Broken Boney, CD

This comp arrived without any information about it. There are some good bands on this comp, though, with punk, rockabilly, ska and even some traditional-sounding Latin music. (JJG)

Broken Boney Records, www.brokenbonezrecords.com

V/A – Buddyhead Suicide, 2xCD

This is a double-disc comp with some good, noisy avant rock tracks and a couple interesting remixes of Murder City Devils and At The Drive-In songs. The music alternates with some funny prank phone calls to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the manager of the Ataris, among others. It is almost worth getting just for the crank calls. (JJG)

Buddyhead, PO Box 1268 Hollywood, CA. 90078

♫ V/A – Bring You To Your Knees: A Tribute To Guns N’ Roses, CD

Why does this even exist? First of all, GNR are technically still a band, though I will admit they might as well not be. Next, tributes never succeed in entertaining me because, while the bands chosen surely love the song they’re covering, they always seem to fall into one of two holes: the band that speeds it up and makes it sound all punk or the band that plays it traditionally. It’s almost impossible to cover a clas-

sic song and make it your own, so why the fuck should you? These songs are classic because GNR made them classic, not because someone thought it would be cool to have their very own recorded and nationally distributed version. A few of bands on this mockery of a “tribute” are great bands (Every Time I Die and The Dillinger Escape Plan), but the rest are mediocre at absolute best (Time In Malta and Vaux). I’ll risk getting kicked out of the Church of Rock, but I’ll shout “Blasphemy!” at this inexcusable piece of garbage. Go buy another copy of *Appetite For Destruction* with the money you had foolishly set aside for this steaming pile. (DH)

Law Of Inertia, 61 Fourth Ave., #125, New York, NY 10003, www.lawofinertia.com

♫ V/A – Delta Masters, CD

Sixteen blues classics redone by modern rockers. It’s sort of an interesting premise, though one could argue that the original versions still stand the test of time and don’t need updating. Whatever. They did it, it’s done. The outcome? Well, some of it works, and some of it’s just god-awful. Here’s the problem: Some of these bands don’t really seem to understand, or maybe even like, blues music, so they completely dismantle the original arrangements and try to hip them up by getting all artsy. Take Pseudo Buddha’s version of “Goin’ Down To Eli’s.” Ambient blues? Horrible. Or even Immortal Lee County Killers’ sloppy-ass version of “When I Lay My Burden Down.” (But maybe they were just hampered when they recorded it.) The tunes that really work are the ones that stay truer to the original arrangements. The versions of “Mr. Crump” by Porch Ghouls, “Forty Four” by Los Mescaleros and “Outside Woman Blues” by Crab Lady are perfectly juiced up renditions of these classic songs that do the originals justice. Please people, let’s not let the hipsters take over the blues. They’ll fuck it up worse than the sports-bar crowd! Oh yeah, Howlin’ Wolf is God. Praise him you sinners. (AJ)

Dog Fingers Recordings, PO Box 2433, San Antonio, TX 78298, www.dogfingers.com

♫ V/A – For Jonathan, 2XCD

The concept of this compilation stems from a man named Jonathan’s battle with cancer. After being diagnosed at the age of 23, a seven-minute film was shot of him around his hometown on super 8 and sent after his death to various musicians asking them to create what they thought would be a fitting soundtrack to the silent film. The end results

are some of the saddest songs that I’ve ever heard, but with an underlying feeling of peacefulness that soothes as much as it troubles. With the proceeds going to the Children’s Inn and the ability to play the movie while listening to any of the songs, this is definitely worth checking out. A wonderful tribute. (DH)

TGVM, 1757 Ware Ave., East Point, GA 30344, www.thegreatvitaminmystery.com

♫ V/A – The Gearhead Records ThingMaker, CD

All hail the cheapo label sampler. For around the cost of a 7”, you’re able to hear several bands without much of a financial investment. When it’s a label with a good roster, your return on investment increases with each song. No, I don’t write infomercial scripts in my free time. Gearhead has built quite the stable of punk bands doing the punk-yet-rock-’n’-roll thing, be they power popish, garageish, or stadiumsque. Making up words is awesome. Most of these tracks are previously available. The best include rippers from New Bomb Turks, Wildhearts, Riverboat Gamblers, Lazy Cowgirls, The Hellcopters, The Nomads and The Hunches. (RR)

Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

♫ V/A – Hello, We Are The Militia Group Volume 1, CD

If I had to compare this Militia Group sampler to an actual social introduction, I’d liken it to an incredibly awkward blind date with that girl you see in Starbucks who thinks the two of you have a lot in common because she’s got cuffed jeans on and you’re always listening to headphones. After about five minutes of conversation, however, you come to realize that the two of you have absolutely nothing in common. You realize what an abomination this person is and run away, wishing you’d never come into contact with her. Through its 16 tracks (which subsequently includes one Police cover, not to mention a “hidden” anonymous cover of the Foo Fighters’ “My Hero”), the Militia Group’s sampler is a demonstration on just how painful formal introductions can be. Every band here sounds as if they have a medical ailment involving nasal blockage. The fact that any of this modern-rock posturing gets passed off as punk or independent rock is astonishing. If the Militia Group ever tries to talk to you at a party, I’d suggest you walk the other way. (MS)

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum St., Ste. L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.militiagroup.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

Jawbreaker / Crimpshrine split 7”: My band is planning an all-Jawbreaker set for Halloween, so we’ve been picking what songs we want to do, each of us suggesting three. I immediately thought of two: “Housesitter” and “Better Half,” a kickass old song from the band’s split with Crimpshrine that came out in 1991 on Skene Records. They probably stopped playing it live by 1992, so I never got to see it performed, but I always wished I had. It’s an epic, ambitious song—as the long instrumental ending conveys—from a band that was pretty young at the time. Blake’s voice is raspy, the guitars are dirty, and the sound is undeniably Jawbreaker. They were playing thinking man’s Bay Area-style melodic/poppy punk even way back then. Speaking of lo-fi raspiness, it doesn’t get much raspier than Crimpshrine. They were a band I always felt I should have liked more than I actually did, but this is a really good, fast-moving song that’s typical Crimpshrine: two vocals, kind of noodley bass, thin-sounding, dirty guitar. Taken together, the songs are an excellent example of the Bay Area sound in the early 1990s, by two of the bands whose identities were infused with that location. Both songs have subsequently been released elsewhere: “Better Half” appeared on Jawbreaker’s *Etc.*, and “Sanctuary” on Crimpshrine’s *Sound Of A New World Being Born*. But it’s always cool to have the original vinyl, and since *Etc.* has been released, prices have come down on eBay for this record. The songs themselves are worth the price of admission.

We hold our rocks, we are ready: Minutemen, *Double Nickels On The Dime*; J Church, *The Drama Of Alienation*; Your Enemies Friends, *You Are Being Videotaped*; Sultans, *Shipwrecked*; Retisonic, *Return To Me*. (The last three are reviewed in this issue.)

Reviewer Spotlight: Patrick Sayers (PS)

Seaweed, Spanaway: Once upon a time in 1995, when seemingly any punk-rock band could get signed (and later dropped) by a major, Seaweed released this near-perfect album that seems to have been all but forgotten over the years. Although hailing from Washington state, you’d never suspect it from the opener “Drug Free Zone,” which sounds more likely to have come from any of their D.C. doppelgangers, and the slinky riff and bubbling snare of “Crush Us All” playfully chase through my headphones. Shifting gears with the monolithic drum stomper “Magic Mountainman,” Seaweed trip things out with spacey, harmonized guitar leads and Hammond-slapped backing vocals that were perhaps a bit too over ambitious for the fickle scene police of the time, but their influence has certainly been recycled by the likes of At The Drive-In, Challenger and The Party Of Helicopters. In a perfect world, this lost classic would get the same late praise of its twin brother, *Dear You*, but it’s unlikely this will hit the reissue circuit anytime soon. Chances are, though, there are plenty of these neon-green beauties hiding in a cutout bin near you.

Adios folks, thanks for the hate mail: TV on the Radio, *Desperate Youth, Blood Thirsty Babes*; Boomtown Rats, *Best Of*; Paint It Black, *CVA*; Madvillain, *Madvillainy* (reviewed this issue).

☛ V/A – Hoags: A Philadelphia Compilation, CD

I can't deny that, as a longtime liver and lover of Philadelphia, I'm a bit biased toward Hot Dog City's debut release, *Hoags*, a 32-track compilation of Philly artists and musicians. But even if I weren't from this goddamned city of brotherly love, I can honestly say that this comp has something for practically everyone. Plastic Little brings the smart/funny hip hop and AM/FM (ex-Franklin) offers up some sweet melodic rock. There are also dub offerings from Version Sound and loud, noisy punk stuff from Clockcleaner and PA Muzzle Loader. Don't miss out on Hail Social's track, either; they have this ridiculously catchy pop sound that won't get out of your head for days. Capturing the many moods and sounds of the Philly music scene is a tough job, but Hot Dog City done us proud. (JG)

Hot Dog City Records, 728 S. 20th St., Philadelphia, PA 19146, www.hotdogcityrecords.com

☛ V/A – The Immaculate Deception, CD

Well this certainly is one of the most god-awful things I've ever heard. A tribute to Madonna? Why do people think it's a good idea to do tribute albums? For the most part, tributes usually suck. First, you need a band that has a stellar back catalog. Madonna has some hits, but the average kid couldn't care less about her. I prefer the Madonna versions of any of these songs. Some of the songs on here that I know I don't even recognize. I can't stress how bad this is. The bands' styles are all over the place: reggae, rockabilly, techno and lots of bad rock. I'm a really laid-back guy, but this makes me want to take it out of the CD player and smash it. (DA)

Delerium Records, PMB 330, 1042 N. Mountain #B Upland, CA 91786, www.deleriumrecords.com

V/A – Location Is Everything, Vol. 2

Following the examples Dischord and Touch And Go, Jade Tree has become a landmark label within the independent music community. Nearing 15 years in the works, their 2004 sampler primarily features currently active bands. Spanning from brutal hardcore to trend-setting indie-pop, Jade Tree's roster is diverse and generally high-quality. (BM)

Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

V/A – Punch Drunk V, CD

The best of the big labels returns with another incredible budget compilation, this time including unreleased tracks by The Krays, Partisans, Emergency, Class Assassins, Terminus City, Reducers SF, ANTISEEN, The Butchers, Radio One, Texas Terri and Bad Luck Charms, as well as 19 hearty, previously released tracks. (AE)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorecords.com

V/A – 60 Songs, CD

This is a comp heavy on the screamy, metallic and atonal, mostly played at a blistering pace. Most of it was too metallic and too screamy for me, but that's my taste. You might like it if you like the Locust or the Blood Brothers. (JG)

Building Records, 15 Cross St., Fullarton SA 5063, Australia, www.buildingrecords.com

V/A – Stamp Collecting (For Beginners), CD

Twenty feel-good, happy-go-lucky tracks from 20 different bands on this all-pop compilation. Rainbows, sugar and smiles will be had by all who listen. Bands featured include: Honeyrider, Baskervilles, Aerospace, Acid House Kings and the Shermans. (MG)

Secret Crush Records, PO Box 3648, New York, NY 10163, www.secretcrushrecords.com

V/A – This Is Your Establishment, CD

Twenty-five punkish bands like Yellowcard, Good Riddance, Glasseater and Dynamite Boy lend their services to help the Center For Constitutional Rights. A good cause and a damn good CD. (BC)

Lorele Records, PO Box 902, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, www.loreleirecords.com

V/A – Tracks & Fields. 2xCD

KRS hits the nail on the head yet again with this second double-CD compilation in a series of three. Full of unreleased tracks by awesome bands like Superchunk, Xiu Xiu, Gravy Train!!!!, Young People, Slumber Party, Paperchase and many more. If only every label could be as wonderfully eclectic! (MG)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave., PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

V/A – Trustkill Records, Blood Sweat And Ten Years, CD

Good indication of the label's bands from the headbanger (Walls Of Jericho) to the melodic (Open Hand). All the groups are fairly hard rockin', if not entirely life-changing. "I Should've Sent Flowers" by Nora really stands out. (AJ)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

V/A – Vacant Cage Comp 1.0, CD

Not your usual three-chord punk sampler, this comp has avant rock, sludgy rock, electro-pop and good ol' indie rock. For \$4, taste what Tennessee has to offer, like Serotonin, Falling Down, Tony Danza T.D.E. and more. I'm not familiar with these bands, but there is some quality stuff here. (DM)

Vacant Cage Records, 1784 W. Northfield Blvd, #215, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, www.vacantcagerecords.com

☛ V/A – Viva La Diva, 10"

This is an amazing record and zine compilation from Irksome Records that features queer and queer-friendly stuff from around the world. Key tracks include "This Beat Is Lezbotronik" from the band of the same name, and "Yr Street, Capp St." by Erase Errata's Sara Jaffe. This lil 10" is a *must have* for anyone wanting to keep on top of the queer-pop scene. Plus, the accompanying 28-page fanzine is full of funny, honest and informative missives on queer diva life. (JG)

IRRK, PO Box 39249, London, SE3 9WP, UK, www.irrk.org

V/A – War: If It Feels Good, Do It, CD

DJs of Mass Destruction present a compilation of turntablists that create a collage of info-heavy beats protesting Bush and the TP trail of bullshit that follows him. In fact, half the compilation seems to be Bush news soundbites. Very humorous at parts and reminiscent of Consolidated's work in the '80s. (VC)

Hip Hop Slam, www.hiphopsiam.com

V/A – A Warm Breath...And A Scream, CD

Compilation album with a wide array of indie pop, folk, and rock bands to benefit a children's hospital in Indianapolis. Congratulations, Innocent Words, you are responsible for my finally actually hearing an Ani DiFranco song. Strong tracks here from Andrea Maxand, Lucky Mulholand and many others. (DAL)

Innocent Words Records, PO Box 674, Danville, IL 61834, www.innocentwords.com

Hey, we want your records:

Punk Planet 4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613
reviews@punkplanet.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Big Drill Car, CD Type Thing. My friend and I were just reminiscing about the old days of long-haired pop punk. There were tons of bands in the Midwest who emulated the Cruz Records roster and the Doughboys. And most of my friends agree that we need another band like Big Drill Car or at least a reunion. *CD Type Thing* was their best record, full of pop hooks, meaty guitars and that thick bass sound that began with the Descendents and continued onto All and the Chemical People. But unlike those bands, Big Drill Car was more focused on powerful melodies than pop-punk experimentation and porn. As much as I like All, Big Drill Car was much more solid. Every song on this album either rocks or is catchy as hell. Guitarist Mark Arnold did some time in a few classic punk bands, but with BDC, he was really allowed to shine. Somewhere along the way he picked up a bunch of rock flourishes that sounded great without being over the top. The band really was an ensemble cast, though. Great drumming, rumbling bass lines and Frank Daly's warm vocals. They really don't make strong, cheerful punk like this anymore, and it's a shame that BDC never got the recognition that they deserved. But I'm sure there's a loyal following of ex-long hairs who still regard this as their favorite CD for driving around.

Beware of the Beef Thief: Leatherface *Dog Disc*; I Excuse, *Is Dead*; AOD, *Humungousfungusamongus*; Shonben, 1999; Hanson Brothers, *My Game*; Annihilation Time, *Bad Reputation*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Matt Siblo (MS)

The Replacements, Let It Be. After I read Michael Azerrad's tell-all of the 1980s indie underground entitled *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, I started sampling some of the albums mentioned in the book that I didn't know, with varying results. With *The Replacements*, however, I was hooked. Westerberg's bi-polar self-destruction struck a chord with me, and I instantly became a fan, especially with *Let It Be*. The mere dynamics of this album are inherently perfect. Written during a transitional period, it incorporates their hardcore roots and their classic-rock ambitions. This record had the amateurish wit of previous efforts ("Gary's Got A Boner," "Tommy Gets His Tonsils Out"), homage to their punk past ("We're Comin' Out") and a newfound, chilling sensitivity and straight-forward melody ("Unsatisfied," "I Will Dare"). Each of these 11 songs is brilliant, and *Let It Be* is the embodiment of an empty promise: It's a snapshot of brief success for a band whose lifespan would eventually be riddled with self-defeating behavior and foolish excess. Regardless of who they were to become, this album will forever stand as one of the best rock records to come out of the 1980s. Its relevance lies in the fact that it's as heartbreaking and inspiring today as it was 20 years ago. *The Replacements* will always be remembered as one of rock's most unfulfilled talent, but *Let It Be* will forever be a reminder of the greatness that could have been.

If I don't listen to these five records by the end of the week, I'm going to dieeeee: Johnny Cash, *Unearthed* box set, Les Savy Fav, *Go Forth*; Pedro The Lion, *Controt*; Circle Jerks, *Group Sex*; Neutral Milk Hotel, *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*.



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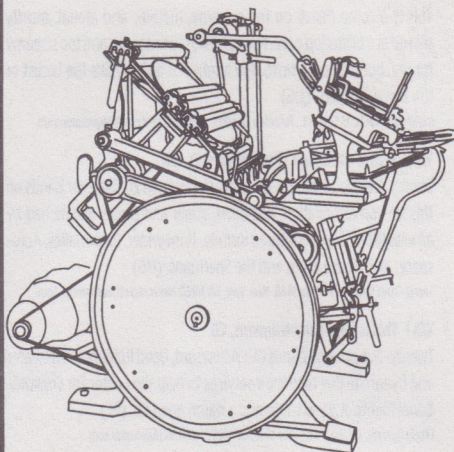


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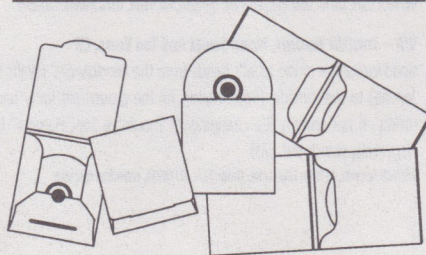
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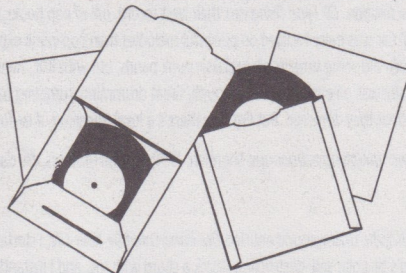
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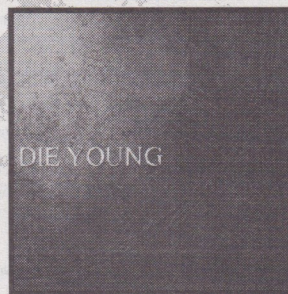
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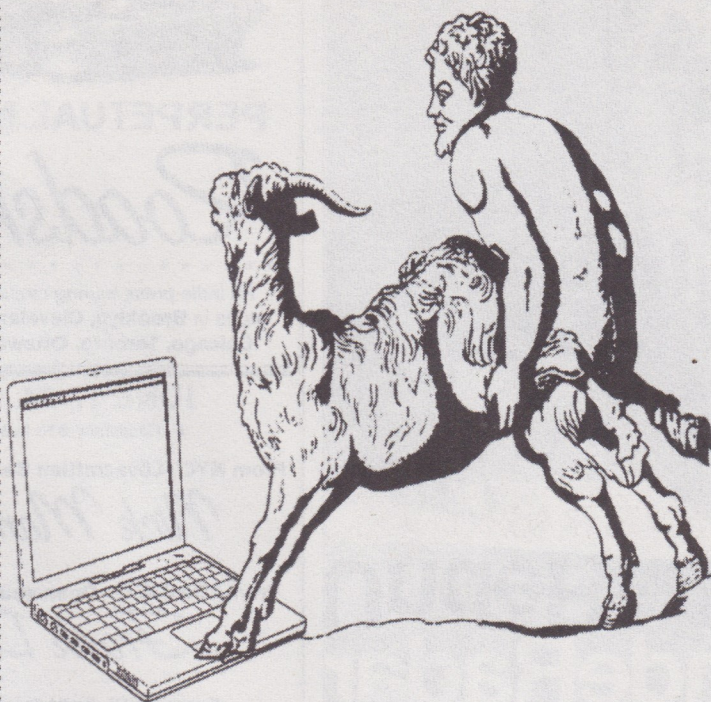
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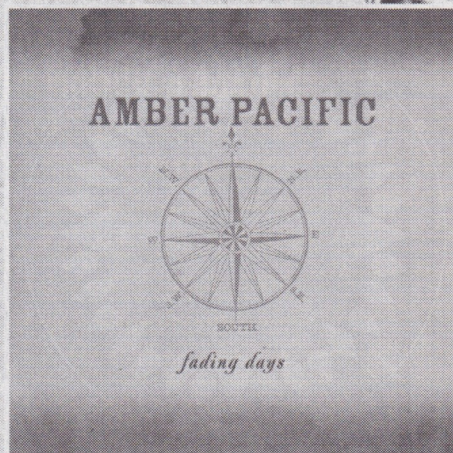


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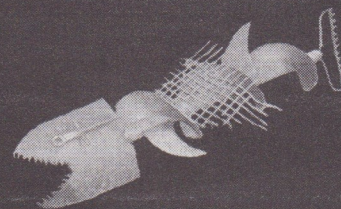
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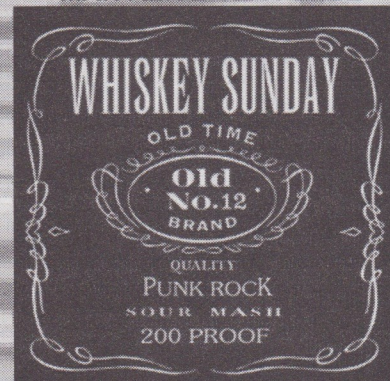
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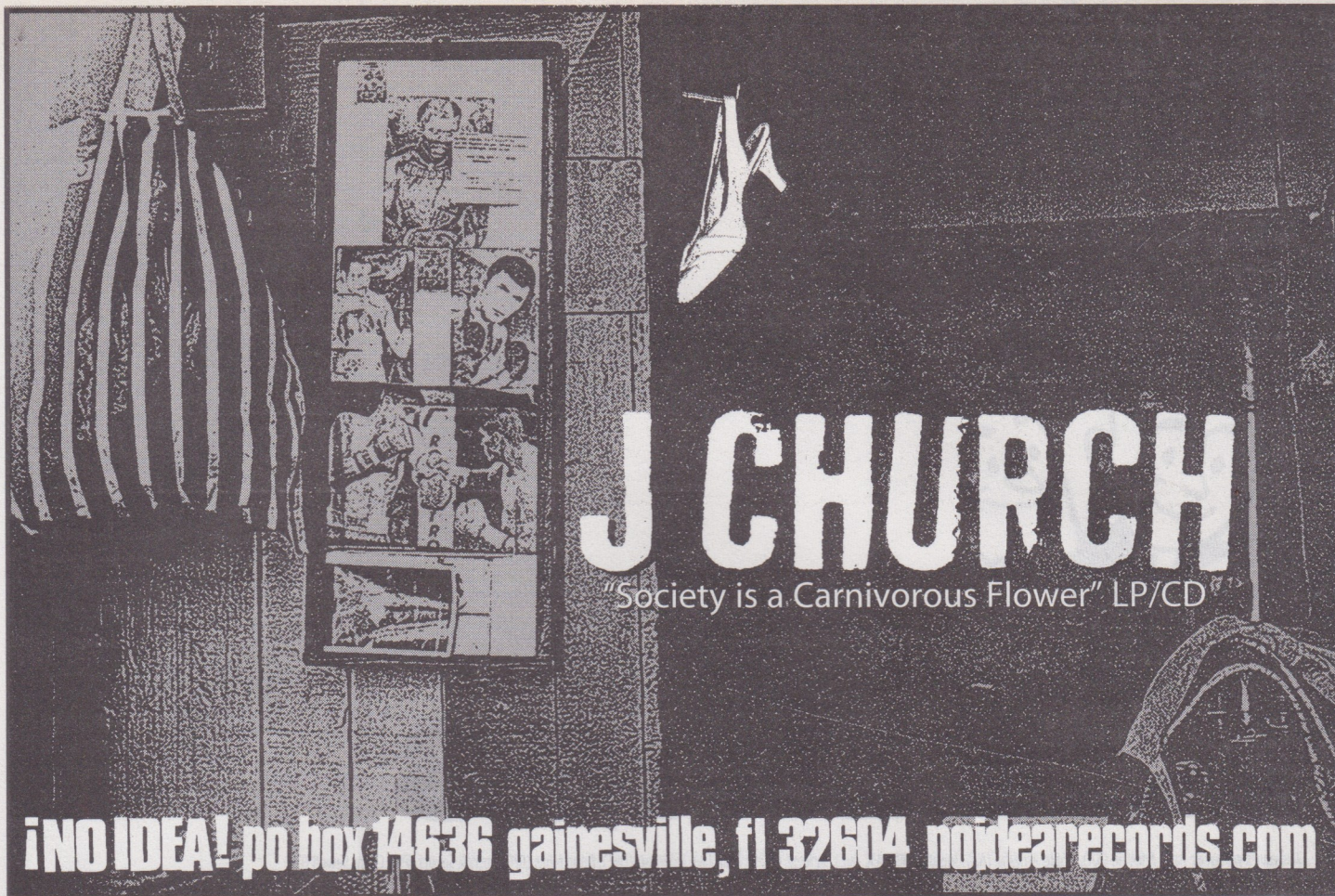
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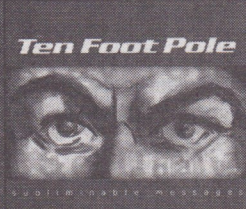
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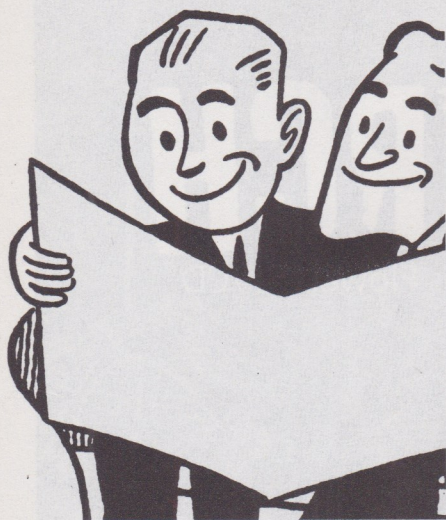
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zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Abbie Amadio (AA), Joe Biel (JB), AJC (ajc), Vincent Chung (VC), Dan Laidman (DAL), Brian Moss (BM), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS)

AK Ink #7

A rude Anchorage zine that carries the emotional maturity of a teenage boy—except I think they're in their 20s. Which isn't bad at all! The fun becomes fun (the brilliant board/drinking game) and the serious parts are hard to take seriously (a rant about being political 'n shit, dude). (VC)

No price given, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK, 99504, www.akink.org

Anti-Media #1

Retail stories make great zine fodder because dumb customers are hilarious—especially adult video store ones. A single page exists to highlight a CD of Chris' cable-access show. Pathetically self-deprecating and smartly funny, Chris hosts the show between animations—alone and drunk in his room. (VC)

50 cents or trade, Chris Miller, 59 Greene St., Pawtucket, RI, 02860, jjape@yahoo.com, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/chrismillershow>

Anti-Media #2

There's really not a lot to *Anti-Media*. This short zine comes with a CD of "The Chris Miller Show," the author's animated cable-access show. While some of the content is clever and even funny, it negates its own merits by being annoyingly self-deprecating. "I am lazy!" "...I think I suck..." Well, if you say so buddy... (ajc)

50, Chris Miller, 59 Greene St., Pawtucket, RI 02860, jjape@yahoo.com, www.groups.yahoo.com/group/chrismillershow

Bad Bunny #3

Another issue of the synergetic zine filled with half-assed comics, essays and reviews. Although I must concede that any and all tributes to Mr. Johnny Cash were darn good, especially a cartoon of JC shooting lethal lasers out of his skull to destroy the "Giant Evil Floating Head!!!!" (AA)

\$1.52 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449

Bad Idea #1

This seems totally essential reading for any punks in the Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti area of Michigan. Like a local *MRR*, it has a pretty tried and true, standard columns/reviews/scene report format, but with a totally inspiring regioal focus. Every scene should have someone this passionate about it. (DAL)

\$1.50, 807 North Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Bejeezus #4

No. 3 was chock-full of interviews with a who's-who of women alt-rock, and the new one is no different, except it's bigger and better: Janeane Garofalo, The Gossip, Semiautomatic, The SSION and more. Brimming with a rare intelligence and playful sophistication, *Bejeezus* is quickly becoming a favorite. (VC)

\$3, PO Box 575, Louisville, KY, 40201, www.bejeezuszone.com

Big Fag #2

A series of stream-of-consciousness musings from a queer perspective. They're mostly about getting tattoos and the reactions of friends and society as his mind develops over time. A fun read with lots of social commentary. (JB)

\$2, PO Box 132, New York, NY 10024, www.inquisitor.com

Born Dead #4

Born Dead is a hardcore/thrash zine that shows its smarts. Even with everything else, you get: well-written music reviews, insightful interviews, short fiction, band photos and political essays. The closing story, "Spank Club," is funny enough to be totally worth the cover price. (ajc)

\$3, Mike Alexander, PO Box 26014, 116 Sherbrook St., Winnipeg, MB R3C 4K9, Canada, defechrist@hotmail.com

Brainscan #20

Alex Wrekk writes nostalgic love letters to friends and landmarks past from her SLC hometown and finds time to slip in a few observations on her more recent Portland habitat. Strong, emotive, personal writing that at times draws you painfully close to Alex's lost friendships. (PS)

\$2, PO Box 14332 Portland, OR 97293, brainscancine@ureach.com

Cash Flagg #2

This is a series of funny, personal film reviews by a guy with a sense of humor and a good meter for quality. I became interested in a few new things and had a good amount of laughs reading about his exploits in the movie theatres. Recommended. (JB)

Free/trade/stamps, Brian Marshall, 258 Main St., Apt 3, Danbury, CT 06810

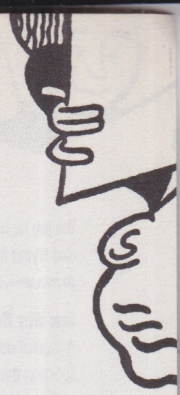
Castration Rite #3

Quick personal blips heralding rainy-day bike rides, spinach pies and platonic hetero man love, amongst other things. Positive introspection, sly wit and a strong sense of self helps carry this short set of playful writing. (PS)

Free/stamps/trades, 40 Glen Ave., Ottawa, ON K1S 2Z7, Canada, castration_rite_zine@yahoo.ca

Chairmen Of The Bored #16.5

There's an old saying, "Only boring people get bored." Already this doesn't bode well for a zine called *Chairman Of The Bored*. Issue 16.5 is billed as the "worst hits" issue, and it is not without good reason. *CotB* is one of the many zines being published by Fanorama Society Publishers, a self-described cabal of zines that I actually like and respect, but to compare this to its distro-mates really wouldn't be fair. The other titles in the collection have broad themes like redemption, revolution, faith and hope, but *CotB* is just plain angry. That



much anger might be "punk," and coming from a black prisoner in Folsom prison it may well be justified, but it makes for a pessimistic, narrow-minded and wholly unenjoyable read. (ajc)

\$3, free to prisoners. Fanorama Society Publishers, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Chairmen of the Bored #17

So it's vapid, juvenile and nothing to write home about. As a matter of fact, it's nothing to write to anyone about. That said, the only things worth mentioning were a short two-panel cartoon about Jared's favorite sandwich shop, Subway, and the line "Always respect proper footing!" (AA)

Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Avenue Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Chairman Of The Bored #18

Another issue of prisoner day-in-the-life(s) and political/social rants. The "Painfully Real Tale" was worth the price of admission, along with the how-to in making prison alcohol. Amusing at times, depressing at others, but hilarious that such anarchistic societal "outcasts" love to ridicule mainstream television shows. Fitting though, considering the circumstances... (AJA)

\$2, Fanorama Society, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Chinmusic #6

This zine has an interesting concept that combines interviews with baseball players and other baseball-related articles along with interviews with bands and music reviews. Perhaps this combination appeals to a larger crowd than I would think. (CS)

\$4, PO Box 225029, San Francisco, CA 94122, www.chinmusic.net

Clamor #25

"The Death Issue" features executions, suicide, and murder. This award-winning magazine always toed the line of interest/annoyance, yet always provocative. Offering a great spectrum of topics that are rarely objectively written about, *Clamor* continues to uphold high production within the progressive zine community. (VC)

\$4.50, PO Box 20128, Toledo, OH 43610, www.clamormagazine.org

Charged Hair & Distorted Riffs, Bullet Belts & Circle Pits #1

Vancouver-centered punk zine with a distinct voice that makes for a compelling read. The intro really hits home and should be required reading for all mid-20s-ish folks having punk-identity crises. There's a lot of writing in here about returning to one's home town and dealing with punk memories and feeling out of place but still inspired, and I find it really compelling. Much of this issue is taken up by a pretty funny Chuck Norris tour report ("I woke up with a clump of pubic hair hitting my face. I sat up, spitting it out of my mouth to see a sleep deprived Blinky giggling and running away"). Great black-and-white cut-and-paste layout with nice use of photos. The reviews section has a strong personal voice, and there are some really funny comics that bring back those themes of alienation but in a wry way. One tip, though: Masturbation is spelled with a "u." (DAL)

\$2/stamps/trade, PO Box 21530, 1424 Commercial Drive, Vancouver, BC V5L-562, Canada

Coming To Amerika #4

Coming To Amerika, an immigration-themed project, has great potential, but it hasn't hit its stride. Pete's tempting stories are the

highlight of the issue, but the actual immigration-related content is slim. He said he hopes to focus on more global migration stories in the future, which is wise. (DAL)

\$2, guiltyexpat@yahoo.com

Daybreak #4

An anarchist newspaper about Minnesota healthcare, the Crandon Mine Victory, positivity in anarchist circles, the apocalypse, surveillance and more. Researched and relevant. (JB)

\$1, PO Box 14007, Minneapolis, MN 55140

Decades Of Confusion Feed The Insect #36

In its entirety, *Decades Of Confusion...* is one large wall hanging of pen & ink gothic cartooning. No art critic am I, but its strange combination of ghoulish figures and anatomy drawings is both beautiful and haunting. (PS)

\$2, 218 Buckingham Place, Philadelphia, PA 19104, www.justinduer.tk

East Village Inky #22

Inky's got a case of the lice-like babies, and Ayun's left to combat those critters on her baby's head armed with natural remedies, baby daddy's impatience and a desire to free her kid from her pest-infested head. Also included are yummy yummy recipes for finicky eaters. (AA)

\$2, Ayun Halliday, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY 11202, www.ayunhalliday.com

Fear Why The Mouse Can't Breathe #5

Although this was kind of a depressing read, it's good to see AI work through his problems in a logical, coherent fashion. He writes about

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (◉) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



the job he hates, patterns he observes in life, getting over a girlfriend and trying to get through life one step at a time. (CS)

No price given, 5258 Five Fingers Way, Columbia, MD 21045, pumthuggee@hotmail.com

Fear Why The Mouse Can't Breathe #6

A journal documenting a band's first tour, *FWTMCB* is a heady introspection that doesn't so much glorify or over-analyze the tour process as it does give an honest account of the boredom and monotony of these trips while sprinkling in short, poetic anecdotes. (PS)

5258 Five Fingers Way, Columbia, MD 21045, pumthuggee@hotmail.com

Flowers From The Grave #1

That this incredible project made it out of the S.H.U. (that's "security housing unit" in prison vernacular) is a testament to Walter's creativity and to the spirit of prisoners everywhere. He's been in solitary for about five years now, but it's obvious that his mind has never been chained down. Walter writes about his experiences in his tiny cell in an interview with himself and includes lots of quotes about anarchist theory to make readers reconsider how they might feel toward someone in his position. The artwork and words are amazing and lyrical, burned on the page in Walter's own handwriting. I definitely hope that he's able to put out another issue. (CS)

\$1, Fanorama Society Publications, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905

Folio #2

The million trinkets stuffed in it were tossed like subscription cards. A collection of poetry and prose that's so erratic, it's hard to find a correlation or rhyme or reason to it. Some horrible, some great. Despite the hectic substance, the impeccable craft is admirable. Includes a mix CD. (VC)

\$1, PO Box 182, Butler, MD 21023

Friction #2

A youthful Boise resident waxes ecstatic over zines, jazz and political demonstrations. Often thoughts jump and bleed into one another, leaving the reader scratching his head. Although not quite at the top of the heap, *Friction* is a committed work in progress that is likely to make waves down the line. (PS)

\$2, c/o Jackson, 4902 Umatilla, Boise, ID 83709, www.geocities.com/loopholedistro

Ghost Pine #7

This personal zine is bubbling over with detail, effectively placing you alongside Jeff as he's mugged by cokeheads, traveling by boat or thumb and, of course, reacting to the events of 9/11. (PS)

\$2, T14 Canter Blvd, Nepean, ON K2G-2M7, Canada

Golf Guide

Max writes about spending the summer in a workhouse, missing his girlfriend and what he does with his time while in jail. It's short and to the point, but his humor still shows through. (CS)

\$1, Max, 4643 University Ave. #8, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Green Anarchy #15

Socio-political newsprint zine dubbed as "An Anti-Civilization Journal of Theory and Action!" with typical anarcho-liberal rants and raves about the "Psychopathology of Work" and "Reclaiming Thoreau for Anarchy," to name a few. "Direct Action Reports" is an interesting running tab of all the shit that these crazy punks have been up to. (AA)

\$4, PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440

Hey, What's Up? #1

Reading this zine was similar to greasing up my mohawk last week. I thought it would be really cool and fun, but it was just a big pain in the ass. This zine appears to be an anecdotal collection of stories, the kind of zine that I love, but in reality it's just some short stories with jokes that are too far into left field. The stories are weird and lack

points, punch lines or any semblance to reality. I could see someone with an offbeat sense of humor getting into this, though. I'm curious why there are so many blank pages, too. The charming thing about it, though, is the way this seems so absently assembled, seemingly without a concept for the whole thing. It strikes me as truly genuine—just creating for the sake of creating something. Now every time I touch my greasy head I'm reminded about how much I expected from this zine, when it was mostly just offensive jokes. (JB)

\$1/trade, 4 Legend Ct., Cincinnati, OH 45244, tabloidssay@aol.com

Hey What's Up #2

Hi Troy, I dig your zine. It's silly, retarded and looks to be remnants of your absurd teenage journal. I dig that, but only because I got it for free to review. I'm not sure other folks will dole out a buck for paragraph-long stories and notebook drawings. (AA)

\$1, Troy Gallaher, 4 Legend Ct., Cincinnati, OH 45244, tabloidssay@aol.com

Impact Press #49

Their tagline always bothered me: "Covering issues the way the media should." It's arrogant and dogmatic, which sets off my skepticism alarms for the heavy-handed political content within. The writing is sharp and oppressive, but sometimes informative and interesting. I still don't understand the point of record reviews in here. (VC)

\$2, PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817, www.impactpress.com

Inking #6

Angst-laden short stories, mostly centered on rebellious teen archetypes. While the intent for these stories seems to be one of empowerment, the author tends to present her female characters in a contemptuous light. Rife mostly with inner conflict, *Inking* is strong with emotion, but makes its statements at varying degrees. (PS)

\$2, 3288 21st St., #79, San Francisco, CA 94110

It's All Gravy #5

This is a DIY-spirited punk zine about South Central Los Angeles and the things going on there. Parts are even in Spanish, and the editors' hearts are big and in the right place. The coverage of the WTO protests in Cancun and write-ups about bands and shows are exciting simply because there is so much enthusiasm. Everyone seems so idealistic and excited. While much of the content seems rushed and incomplete, it has huge potential. I'd like to see interviews with promoters to discuss the issues they touch upon here: a door prices are too high; promoters aren't contributing to the scene. More development on the articles could make this zine really fantastic. (JB)

\$1, 312 W. Eighth St., Los Angeles, CA 90014, gravyzine@hotmail.com

Left Back #3

A journal of disintegration, *Born Dead* chronicles the sad destruction of a life and a relationship. Despite the tales of drug use and petty crime, it remains unapologetic, except for when those actions affected his relationship with his beloved. It's one prisoner's love letter full of regret and remorse. (ajc)

\$2, free to prisoners, Fanorama Society Publishers, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, www.fanorama.tk

Lucidity #3

Thick with content and wrapped in a blue, see-through cover, *Lucidity* is a per-zine out of Ireland. It follows the format: journal-style entries, maudlin poetry, cut-and-paste layout and original artwork. It fully recognizes its own clichéd awkwardness and does it anyway. That's what makes it so original. (ajc)

\$2, Ed Hannan, Downings Cross, Prosperous, Naas, Co. Kildare, Ireland, zinetrade@yahoo.co.uk, www.geocities.com/spudmonkey999

Lululand #3/#4 set

In this personal zine, Lulu hilariously laments her unemployment and overly politicized boyfriends. When flipped, the zine repeats itself as a screenplay. *Genius*. The zine becomes a narration of what seems like a short film, adding external actions to the witty, introspective thoughts and creates a total mindfuck. (VC)

\$3 for both, PO Box 356, Van Nuys, CA 91408-0356

Me And My Beer And How Great I Was, zine/CD

This is a little book of short stories with an accompanying CD of prank calls and narration to some of the stories. If you like prank calls, order away, but I never got the whole phenomenon. Some of the stories are actually good, pithy and bizarre. Others are straight-up bathroom jokes. (DAL)

No price given, Chester Taft, PO Box 1532, Boston, MA 02117-1532, www.pillpartypress.com

Media Whore #3

Subtitled "Make your own damn media," this zine genuinely wants you to. It is a rarity among zines. More than just a call to action, it suggests resources and offers good, solid advice from people who've actually had success in radio, film, magazine and book publishing. Recommended. (ajc)

\$2, Media Whore, 37 Home St., Malden, MA 02148, www.mediawhorezine.com

9 And A Half Left #9

An Ohio-based punk comes of age, takes on the responsibility of raising a child on low wages, amongst other personal writing and resurrected pieces from another abandoned zine. (PS)

No price given, Mike Rodemann, 1353 Westlake Ave., Lakewood, OH 44107, scraps@eudora-mail.com

941 #2

Stories about Blake, by Blake. Nothing particularly engaging about girls, skateboarding, drinking, sex and his lame-o parents. Oh, and poetry too. Practice makes perfect, and I can potentially see potential in 941.

\$1, Blake Gardner, ONU - 6778, One University Ave., Bourbonnais, IL 60914, sellmold-clothes@aol.com

Notes On Baby-Making

This pamphlet tells women that motherhood keeps them subservient, steals their independence to create art or engage in activism and perpetuates the economic machine and overpopulation. When you swing that far to the left, you might as well swing that far to the right. When the makers of this pamphlet insinuate that human beings are an economic commodity, they are as crooked in their method of resistance as the money-mongers are in their perpetuation of cheap overseas labor. Deconstruct the picket-fence heterosexual myth before you condemn all that is motherhood. On the healthy side, it also encourages ladies to explore their sexuality, etc. (AJA)

\$1 or two stamps, Overground Distribution, PO Box 1661, Pensacola, FL 32591, www.overground.info

No. 13

A Boston music publication with basic columns, interviews and reviews. Much of the focus is local, and that's where this publication shines. The editor is very enthusiastic, and the whole thing has a shine of new, excited energy to it. (JB)

\$1, PO Box 1299 Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.net

No. 13: In The Van

This punk zine is printed on good ol' get-your-hands-dirty newsprint. It's a tour journal compiling the antics of more than a dozen punk and rockabilly bands, and it's hilarious. If you like reading about life on the road and the characters you meet, this is for you. (ajc)

No price given, FNS Publishing, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.fnsboston.net

Philadelphia Independent #14

Mainly focused on its namesake's cultural, social and political issues, this massive newspaper offers a humorous spin on today's hot topics. Not entirely satirical, *The Philadelphia Independent* is a committed alternative news source. Highly recommended to all. (PS)

\$2, 1026 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19107, www.philadelphiaindependent.net

Punk Shocker #11

This thick British rag consists mostly of some interviews and lots of reviews. This is the last issue, so get it while it's still around. Comes with a nifty poster for a Poison Ivy/The Gits/Naked Aggression show. (CS)

Contact first for U.S. price, Punk Shocker World Headquarters, POB I.T.A., Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1TA, UK

Rancid News #5

An inadvertent "all-boys" issue warrants this "all-girls" issue from this women-run publication. Kinda drives the point home about that punk/hardcore boy's club, huh? The interviews cover some unfortunate pickings, with bands I don't care for (Walls Of Jericho, Pretty Girls Make Graves) or bands I haven't cared for in years (Brammobile). The thing is, the interviews rarely touch on the bands, but focus more on candid conversations about women's issues within the underground, which is a lot more interesting than that fight in the bathroom at Hell Fest. I wished the interviews pushed deeper into the issues, but it was enough to hint at the looming issues that are normally left unsaid. (VC)

\$3.60/EZ, PO Box 382, 456-458 The Strand, London, WC2R 0DZ, UK

Razor Burn #2

Some of the stuff in here is mildly funny (like the piece that pokes fun at the *Family Circus* comic) as well as offensive (a few of their pulp-influenced comics in the back go a bit too far). But there are enough other interesting graphics and articles to make it an all-right read. (CS)

\$2, 2335 East Ave., Columbus, OH 43202

Reglar Wiglar #19

In this 10th anniversary issue you get, well, nothing much different from past issues: an interview with MOTO, the Chicago Rat Patrol bike group as well as their trademark variety of reviews and comics. (CS)

\$3, 1650 Milwaukee Ave., #545, Chicago, IL 60647, reglarwiglar.com

Riot #5

Some funny stories, interviews with obscure bands, zine and record reviews. I think the biggest potential exists in minimizing the music coverage and expanding more on the stories about interacting with strangers who inexplicably confide in her. (JB)

\$1/guitar picks/mix tape/trade, Liz Worth, 157 Delta St., Toronto, ON M8W 4S4, Canada

17

Max's zine is titled "17" because all the stories took place when he was 17. It's an interesting concept, and the stories are pretty good. They're a little typical (doing crazy stuff with friends, meeting girls, etc.), but there's a nostalgic sense of chance to all of them. (CS)

\$1, Max, 4643 University Ave. #8, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Safety Pin Girl #22

With this issue, Jessica says goodbye by writing of her travels through various parts of the country and Canada while on zine tours. She's not afraid to show that she's attached to all of those places and the people in them, even though it's time to move on. Good stuff. (CS)

\$3, Jessica Wilber, 410 18th St., Racine, WI 53403

Scenery #17

Mike's zine reads like a collection of wonderfully amusing anecdotes. It makes me sit and smirk while I reread each paragraph a few times. There are also comics from contributors and a series of updates from a friend visiting Nepal. The cover is a three-color screen print on nice paper stock that "looks like an Ocean Pacific shirt." This is the kind of zine that seems so good it's almost like a historical document, and you need to keep a box with every back issue tucked away in your basement somewhere. Listen to me, I sound like a fuckin' college art snob appreciator. But really, it is *that* good, and if you are frustrated with the amateurish quality in many zines, this might be just what you are looking for. It's quite refined and smart. (JB)

\$3, Mike Taylor, PO Box 28226 Providence, RI 02908

Signal To Noise #33

This long-running, slick zine devotes its pages to improvised and experimental music of all subgenres. Features on El-P, The Magic Band and Boredoms/OOIOO's Yoshimi P-We are well-detailed journeys into the artists' creative psyche. A welcome overachiever, *STN* boasts a commitment to the music aficionado who travels off the beaten path. (PS)

\$4, PO Box 585, Winoski, VT 05404, www.signaltonoisemagazine.org

6 Is 9 #1

Although the penmanship is notable, *6 Is 9* reads more like an academic thesis than a zine. In the absence of strong subject material, the majority of the content is candy coated with wordy sentences and pretentious tone. It is often said that *The New York Times* is written at a reading level designed for eighth graders; therefore, instructive pieces on how to make bat costumes should probably be written with smooth readability in mind. While opinionated lists of essential records and critiques of the American movie trailer industry may serve the interests of some, I personally find this type of material to be mundane and stagnant. If creative writing (or art in general) fails to invoke emotion, then what purpose does it serve? (BM)

No price given, John, PO Box 9591, Seattle, WA 98109, www.jaguaro.org

Slouch #6

Eclectic rants on veganism (great), voting (lame), DIY salsa (delicious), Burning Man (sexy), Burning Man again (not sexy), the Kama Sutra (sexy) and other such topics. The best piece, I thought, was about leaving San Francisco for New Jersey and finding something like community in local politics and coffee. (DAL)

\$2.50, www.momireads.slouch.net

Slug And Lettuce #78

A quarterly punk publication that is consistent in both schedule and quality. Mostly valuable for the vast networking, photos, art, writing, reflection, reviews, and advertisements. Crucial.

60 cents, PO Box 26632 Richmond, VA 23261

Stolen Sharpie Revolution

Alex Wreck does DIY like *woah*. SSR is an excellent, comprehensive guide to novice and experienced zinesters alike. Alex and a band of contributors walk you through every step of the zine process: essential tools to keep within arm's reach; how-to instructions on book-binding; tips to get your zine distributed; and any other zine-ing curiosity. This pocket-sized resource should be handy if the thought of ever creating a zine has ever slid into your ear canal and gnawed your brain. Even if you have no interest in publishing, and you're satisfied being a looky-loo, the lists of distros, zine libraries and

stores that carry zines worldwide are listed for your benefit. Now whyncha just buck up and do something good for yourself and grab a copy. (AA)

\$3, Microcosm Publishing, PO Box 14332, Portland, OR 97293, www.microcosmpublishing.com

Swan Lake #1

A beautiful collection of copier and collage-style artwork with tons of originality. This is a rather impressive first issue, and what little text appears complements the art and feeling nicely. The covers feature an original print. Recommended. (JB)

75 cents, Amie Knable 728 Oxford Ln., Ft Collins, CO 80528 photogurl@msn.com

Tablet #85

In this "Hook-Up Issue," there's a pretty good variety of stuff: satire on how to score free stuff, an article about a Seattle commune and interviews with actor Viggo Mortensen, The Crystal Method and DJ Donald Glaude, among others. This was a good, interesting read. (CS)

\$3, 1122 E. Pike Street, PMB #1435, Seattle, WA 98122-3934, www.tabletmag.com

Throwaway #1

A nicely put-together quarter-page zine made up of mostly hand-drawn artwork, poetry and modern-day soliloquies. The artwork was more engaging than the content, which dealt with everything from lust to relationships to the overall shittiness of everyday life. (AJA)

\$2, www.sidedown.com/throwaway

Verbicide #10

Well put-together from years of experience, *Verbicide* combines a music magazine with a heavy dose of poetry and fiction. The creative contributions are actually good, and there ARE interviews with Youth Brigade, Dennis Lehane (author of *Mystic River*) and Street Dogs. (VC)

\$3.95 32 Alfred St., New Haven, CT 06512, www.scissorspress.com

Where Are YOU Tonight?

I will admit that I had no idea what was going on initially (in general and in regards to this zine). But soon, little things started to make sense, but in general, I am still wading knee-deep in confusion. It's a kaleidoscope of mixed metaphors, creative nonfiction and jibber-jabber centering on the author, Jim Hayes, and his role as a "rock critic" stationed in Atlanta. Apparently, he is/was a writer for *Flipside*, and now he's writing about being a writer who writes about writing about being a rock critic in Atlanta. If you're still curious about this Jim Hayes character, he's included "The Second Annotated Bibliography Of The Cultural Works Of Jim Hayes (1984-2004)." Now you can get your learn on. But wait, there's more, "Cut Another Straw, This One's Got Blood On it: Haiku And Reflections Regarding The Atlanta Rock Scene" is the most amusing piece with gems like, "I told her/ I'd fuck her/ If her band was better." Finally, an honest man. (I still have no idea what was going on.) (AA)

No price given, Jim Hayes, PO Box 1459, Marietta, GA 30061

Zoo #24

This issue includes the poem "My Girl" by Jon Leon, which gives a lurid description of a prostitute told by a voyeuristic speaker. His words flow nicely into each other, creating an unsettling image and mood, and exuding sexuality in the dominance interplay between characters. Alluring, but where the commentary lies I'm not too sure. (AJA)

\$1, Leggett Press, 1214 College Place, Raleigh, NC 27605, leggettpress@yahoo.com

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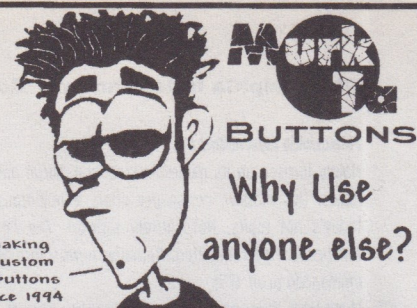
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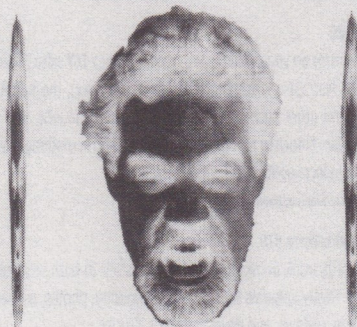
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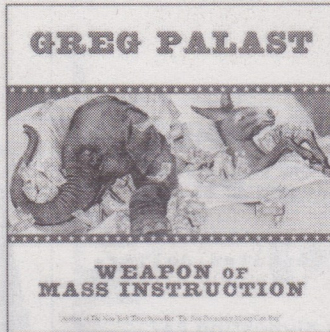
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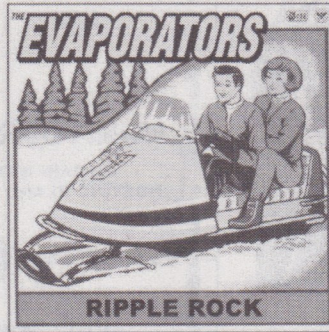
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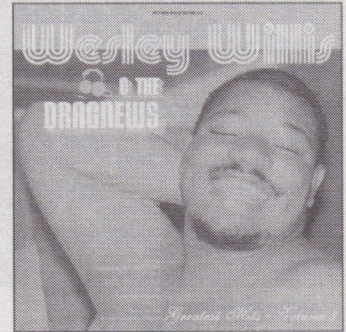
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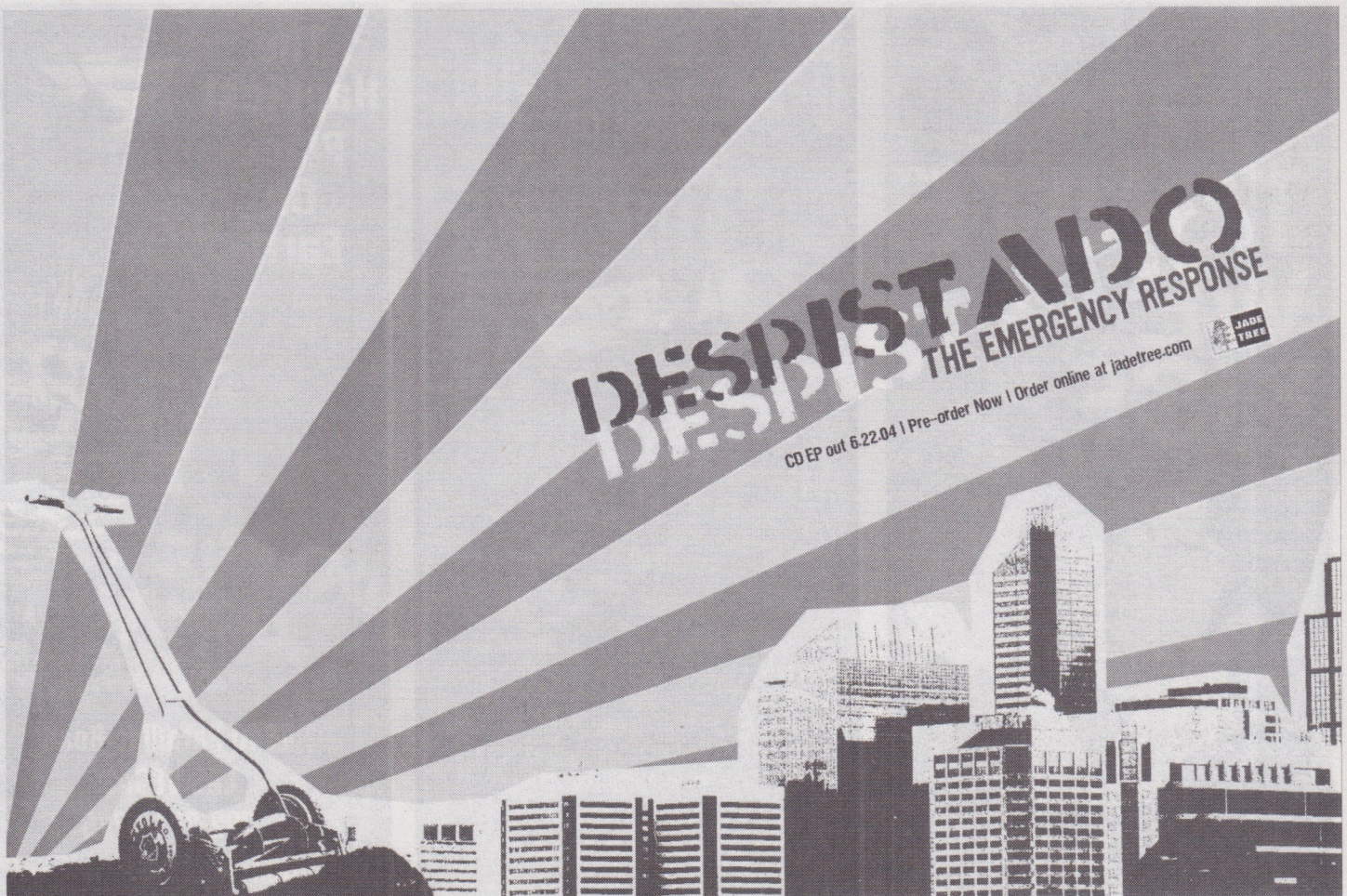
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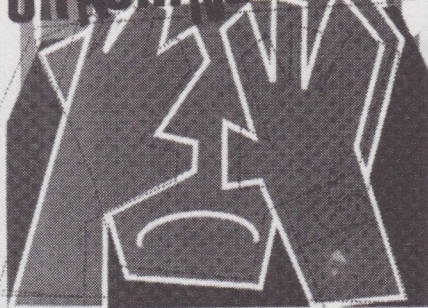


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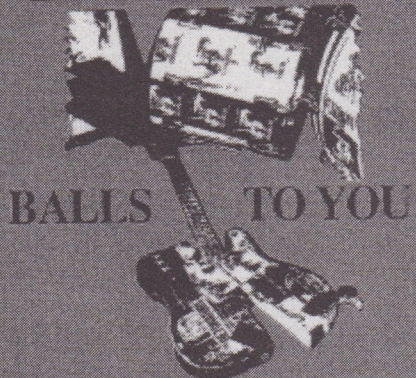


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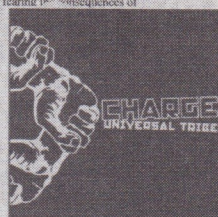
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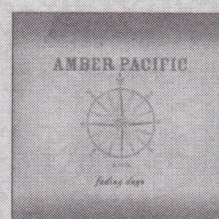
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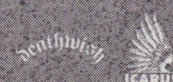


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100 DEMONS

Self Titled CD

UPCOMING RELEASES: CAST ASIDE "The Struggle" CD / MAFKACHE GUNROOM "Wrecked" CD / Dead Man's Hand DS: FIRST BLOOD & BLACKLISTED Split 7" EP / DEAD CITY "No Faith in Factory" CD / DEAR LOVER "Wear Your Wounds" 2XCD (1. Rambo's me or I / "Death Bed" A book by MEG LINDOLD (OUTG, SOME GIRLS) / CONVERGE "You Fail Me" LP (CD version on EP/IMP)

see also

Where to find more information
about this issue's features.

interviewed this issue:

The Gossip

Confirm all those juicy rumors regarding those crazy, west-coast whippersnappers check out their website: www.gossipyouth.com

Or consult their label: www.killrockstars.com

And also check out: www.kpunk.com

Papa M

The Papa-M website will tell you everything you ever wanted to know about Papa M, but were afraid to ask: www.papa-m.com
Or write: P.O. Box 7626 Louisville, KY 40257

But if that's not enough to hold you, Drag City Records will fill in the gaps www.dragcity.com

Pink Bloque

Learn how you can help make this world a little more gynocentric: www.pinkbloque.com

The Promise

The inflammable Promise are online at: www.thepromisehardcore.com

Their album *Believer* is available from Indecision Records:
www.indecisionrecords.com

Heeb

For more information on the only magazine made especially for the chosen people nouveau: www.heebmagazine.com

Lucero

Checkout their perpetual touring schedule, see pictures, and Listen to some of the saddest, loneliest, drunkenest love songs on the net: www.lucerofamily.net

Chalmers Johnson

You should all read *Blowback*, it's very informative. More information about this and other Henry Holt books is available at: www.henryholt.com

Chalmers Johnson often writes for a variety of online publications. Search www.commondreams.com
www.antiwar.com
and read articles and editorials that explain how this country got so fucked up.

Afro-Punk

Do yourself a favor, and learn more about the Afro-Punk documentary: www.afropunk.com

If you're looking to screen the film, write screenings@afropunk.com

articles in this issue:

Synergy, Indie Style

The zines/companies mentioned in the story and their respective websites follow:

American Music Press (AMP)
www.ampmagazine.com

Coldfront Records
www.coldfrontrecords.com

Copper Press
www.copperpress.com
54°40' or Fight!
www.fiftyfourfortyorfight.com

Skyscraper magazine
www.skyscrapermagazine.com
Skyscraper Media
www.skyscrapermedia.net

Invisible Youth zine
www.invisibleyouth.com
Invisible Youth PR
www.invisibleyouthpr.com

Law of Intertia
www.lawofinertia.com

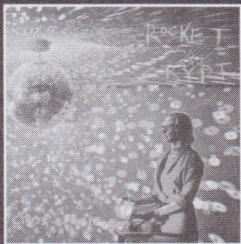
Hopper PR
www.hopperpr.com

Green Dream
Want to learn more about how to turn the big Apple in the Emerald City?
www.greenhomenyc.org

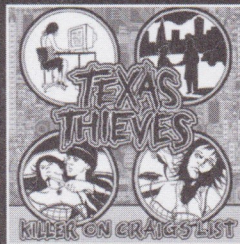
The Olive Pickers

Learn more about the ISM and the work that their doing to help Palestinians living under Israeli occupation:
www.palsolidarity.org

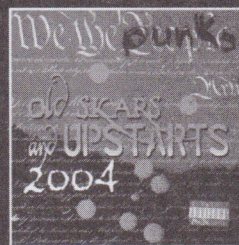
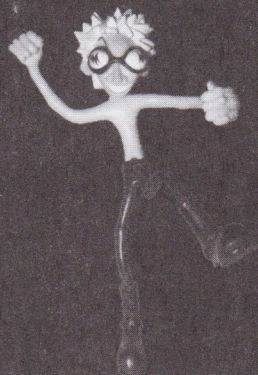
CHECK OUT THESE HOT NEW RELEASES



ROCKET FROM THE CRYPT
"Circa Now"



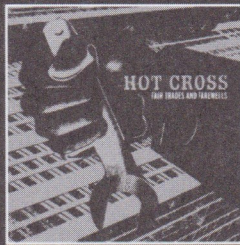
TEXAS THEIVES
"Killer On Craig's List"



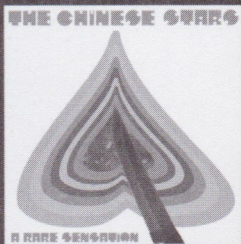
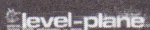
VARIOUS ARTISTS
"Old Skars and Upstarts"



HUNNS
"Long Legs Die Hunns"

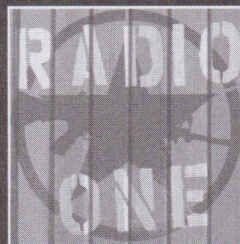


HOT CROSS
"Fair Trades and Fairwells"

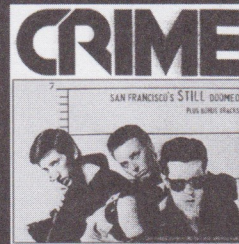


THE CHINESE STARS
"A Rare Sensation"

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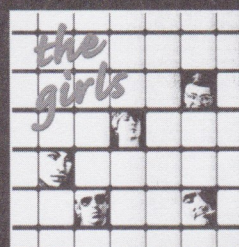
RADIO ONE
"Radio One"



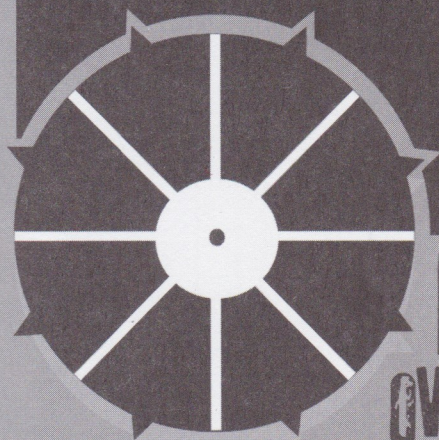
THE CRIME
"San Francisco's Still Doomed"



THE FREEZE
"Crawling Blind/Freak Show"



THE GIRLS
"The Girls"



MORDAM RECORDS

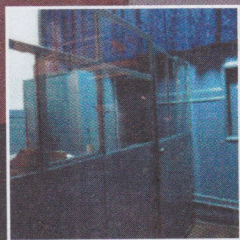
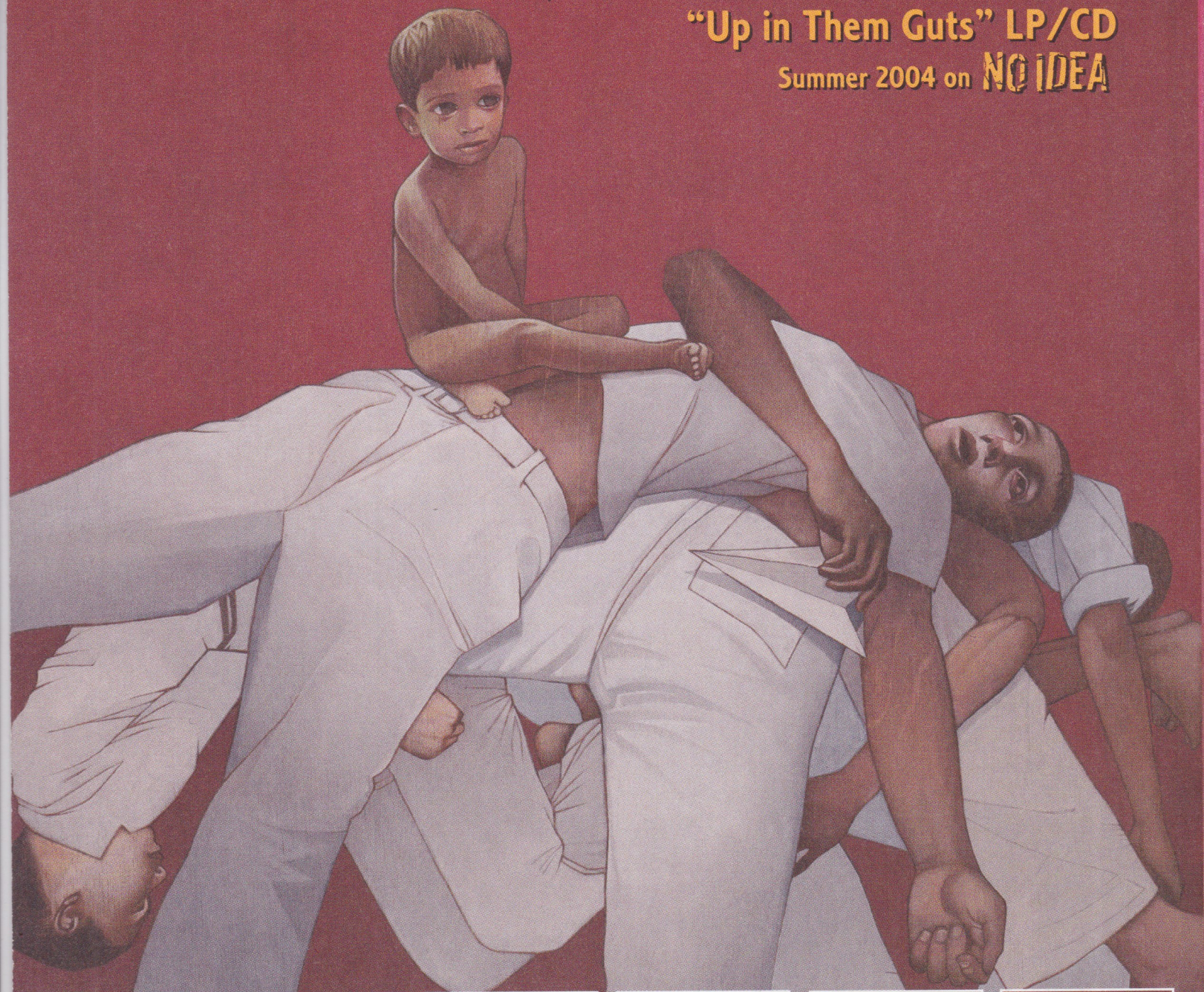
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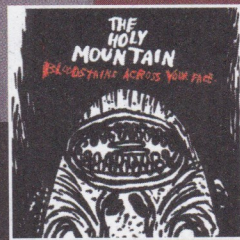
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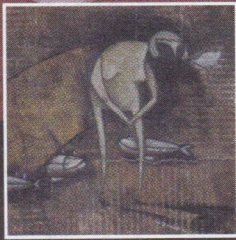
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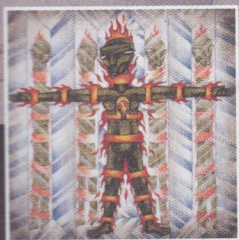
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punk planet

July & August 2004

"I think I was in the kitchen making Ramen and they came out of the basement and said I should come down and sing." — Beth Ditto

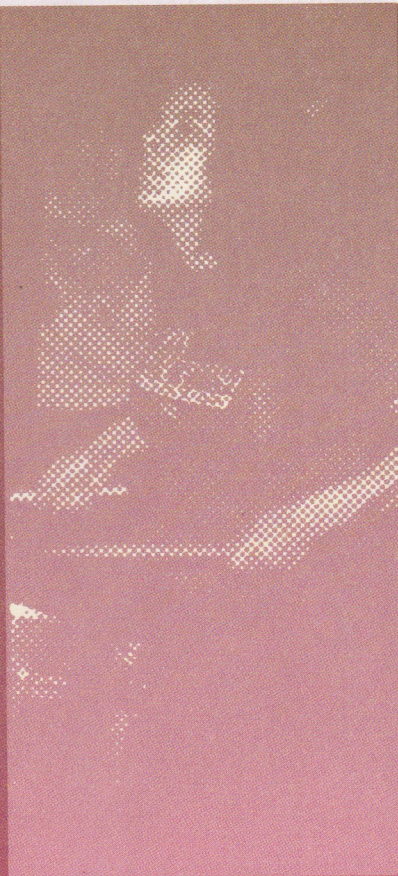
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JULY AND AUGUST 2004

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